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PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

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PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY OF
THE OLD FAITH AND
THE NEW REFORMATION

BY

WILLIAM A. VROOMAN

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
When just the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs."

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To

MY GOOD COMRADE
IN LIFE AND THOUGHT
ROSE KEMP VROOMAN

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PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGION OF CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

"And in every age, from the Apostolic to our own, Christianity has been taken to mean, not the religion of Christ, but some doctrine about Christ." MARTINEAU.

In *Oldtown Folks*, Mrs. Stowe introduces us to Sam Lawson and his protest against the kind of preaching he had listened to. "Wal," said Sam, "Parson Simpson's a smart man; but I tell ye it's kind o' discouragin'. Why, he said our state and condition by natur was jest like this. We was clear down in a well fifty feet deep, and the sides all round nothin' but glare ice; but we was under immediate obligation to get out, 'cause we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever had got out, and nobody would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em. And whether he would or not nobody could tell; it was all sovereignty. He said there w'ant one in a hundred, not one in a thousand—not one in ten thousand—that would be saved. Lordy massy, says I, ef that's so they're any of 'em welcome to my chance. And so I kind o' riz up and come out."

That incident epitomizes the revolt of the human soul against many of the dogmas of the churches. Men everywhere, in increasing numbers, have "kind o' riz up and come out." In rejecting the dogmas of the churches do they cease to be Christians?

We ask the Roman Catholic Church. It maintains that "Faith is necessary to eternal salvation," and that "a faith that does not comprise all of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is no faith at all," and

that "all men who through their own fault die without Christian faith are sentenced to eternal perdition." And obedience to the entire sacramental system of the Church must be added to this doctrinal belief, for, "The graces which Christ merited for us by his death are communicated to us by the means of grace, that is to say, the holy sacrifice of the mass, the sacramentals, and prayer" and "he who neglects the use of the means of grace cannot be saved." "Through the sacrifice of the mass, sinners obtain the grace and gift of penitence, while the just obtain the remission of venial sin and of the temporal penalty due to sin." We are told that, "As the holy sacrifice of the mass is an oblation of infinite value, to celebrate or hear mass is a good work which surpasses all other good works in excellence" . . ."Baptism is indispensably necessary to salvation; hence children who die unbaptized cannot enter heaven . . . Those who wilfully neglect holy communion, for a lengthened period, incur the risk of spiritual death here and eternal damnation hereafter."

The Roman Church thus maintains that saving truth and saving grace are to be found only in the doctrines and sacraments imposed by the Church. "Whoever through his own fault remains outside the Church will not be saved," and "heresy is one of the greatest of all sins, when it is not the result of invincible ignorance . . . He who lives in heresy through ignorance for which he himself is not to blame, is not a heretic in the sight of God" and "if he remains outside the Church through no fault of his own he may be saved, if he leads a God-fearing life."[1]

There is mercy, according to this system, for the ignorant but none for him whose intelligence leads him to deliberate rejection of the dogmas and sacraments of the hierarchy. Two ways of salvation are thus open for men. One may remain in invincible ignorance and

[1]Francis Spirago: The Catechism Explained, pp. 91, 93, 99, 101, 531, 543, 595.

live a God-fearing life, or one may believe and obey the Church. For rational dissent there is no mercy. The plain man is impressed with the peril of disbelief and disobedience. Unless he believes and obeys he may suffer eternal loss. Such is the Christian religion in its most dogmatic form.

The evangelical Protestant lets the priestly mediators and their sacramental salvation go, but he clings to their theology. He says, for example, "The Christian religion is theological or nothing . . . This religion cannot be stated without theology."[2] And the theology he means is that of the ancient creeds. It requires "saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is justifying faith, in the sense of faith in a forgiving God through the cross of Christ." For him "a spirituality without positive, and even dogmatic, content is not Christianity; nor is faith in the broad general truths of religion."[2] This faith must have a specific theological content, as that is defined in the creeds, or it is not Christian faith at all. "Faith in Christ involves the Godhead of Christ. Faith in Christ, in the positive Christian sense, means much more than a relation to God to which Christ supremely helps us . . . It means that in meeting Christ we meet with God . . . It means the deity of Christ is at the center of Christian truth for us."[2]

Hence the evangelical Protestant does not hesitate to say that to practice the religion of Christ and emulate his example does not make one a Christian. "To imitate the religion of Jesus is to cultivate an order of piety absolutely different from the entire tradition of the Christianity created by the Gospel of Christ, a tradition which becomes most explicit in Evangelical Protestantism."[2] The modern tendency to follow the religion of Christ in preference to the orthodox Christian religion is condemned by this school as the greatest apostasy in the

[2]P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 3, 29, 9, ff.

Church. "The Gospel of Jesus," we are told, "made the 'religion of Jesus' impossible."[2]

The evangelical Protestant contrasts Liberal Christianity with traditional orthodoxy and condemns it for abandoning a theological Gospel about Christ although it still affirms loyalty to the spiritual ideals of Christ. "The one makes the center of Christianity to be the ideal or spirit of Christ, the other, the cross of Christ. One makes the Cross the apotheosis of sacrifice with a main effect on man, the other makes it the Atonement with its first effect on God. . . . The latter postulates the deity of Christ, the other but his relative divinity."[2]

The Christian experience of salvation is thus made inseparable from a faith having the orthodox theological content. And when that kind of faith is firmly held the spiritual experience which follows the will to do the will of God, as taught by Christ, is taken as proof of the truth of the theology. Any spiritual experience that does not issue from and confirm the orthodox beliefs about Christ is to be regarded as a sort of counterfeit. "The Godhead of Christ is a faith that grows out of that saved experience in the Cross, which is not only the mark but the being of a church; so that undogmatic Christianity is foreign, false and fatal to any church. The deity of Christ is the necessary expression of such a church's sense of what God has done for the soul in Christ . . . The theology of the incarnation is necessary to explain our Christian experience . . . It is the evangelical experience of every saved soul that is the real foundation of Christological belief everywhere."[2]

The only conclusion possible from this standardized system of doctrine is that the lack of belief in the true deity of Christ and the blood atonement proves a lack of a true Christian experience and the absence of the only condition of receiving it. It is even made doubtful whether "invincible ignorance" might be made a ground of divine mercy. At any rate, they who would make

[2]P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 3, 29, 9, ff.

their salvation sure ought to hold to the creedal faith tenaciously.

That devout and spiritually minded men may themselves enter the kingdom of God taking all their theological or sacramental paraphernalia with them, we are quite willing to concede. But what of those who cannot accept these as essentials of the Christian faith and life? Is their salvation and eternal happiness to be rendered doubtful by their sincere dissent? Or with Lowell may we not think that

> "Perhaps the deeper faith that is to come
> Will see God rather in the strenuous doubt
> Than in the creed held as an infant's hand
> Holds purposeless whatso is placed therein."

The Christian religion, as developed in the Church into a Gospel about Christ, originated in the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ (Messiah), Son of the Living God." These titles, however, had no such meaning for those men of Galilee as since has been attached to them by theologians. The development of doctrines about Jesus might be described indeed as the forced growth of new meanings for old phrases.

The first three books in the New Testament were written by disciples who believed that Jesus had been anointed by God to become the Messiah or Christ, the King of Israel. Mark opens his memoirs with the words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Messiah, the son of God." Matthew commences his narrative with a quest for him who "is born king of the Jews," one who should be a "governor, which shall shepherd my people Israel." Both he and Luke trace his lineage to David through Joseph as his father. The Messiah was expected to spring from the seed of David and to ascend his throne. Luke describes the kind of Messiah his Galilean friends expected Jesus to become. The angel is alleged to have stated it to Mary: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son

of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the House of Israel forever." No language could be more explicit in defining what the disciples meant by the title, "the Christ, Son of the living God," unless it be that of the father of John the Baptist, "Blessed be the God of Israel, for He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the House of His servant David, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us." Charged by his Jewish enemies with being a political pretender, on account of these claims made by his disciples, Jesus was crucified as "king of the Jews" and his disillusioned followers mourned, "We hoped it was he which should redeem Israel," meaning salvation from their political enemies. On his reappearance after death they at once inquire, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?" When he disappeared again they believed his absence would be short and that he would soon return to complete the restoration of the ancient monarchy as they hoped. This Jesus, said the intrepid Peter, was "a man approved of God" and since he had been killed by "lawless men," God had raised him from the dead, wherefore, "Let all the house of Israel know that God hath made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom ye crucified." Him "the heavens must receive until the times of the restoration of all things" spoken of by the Jewish seers. So the watchword of the disciples became "the Lord cometh" and their prayer, "Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus."

Nothing can now be more obvious than that the apostles never saw their expectations realized. God did not place Jesus on the throne of his father David, He has never caused him to reign over the House of Israel, and did not by him save the Jews as a people from their enemies. For all they had been taught by Jesus himself and though they are said to have been "filled with the Holy Spirit," these beliefs have been proven by

events to have been erroneous. It is apparent that on this subject at least an infallible revelation of truth was no part of the divine program. And if the immediate companions of Jesus were not safeguarded against error in regard to the mission of Christ, the presumption is strongly against any inerrancy in the doctrinal interpretations of later followers. It was their devotion to their Master and willingness to walk in his Way of Life which made them Christians, and not the transitory and often mistaken beliefs they conceived about him.

Paul expanded the doctrine concerning Jesus as Messiah and Lord into a form of internationalism. Identifying Jesus with the heavenly Messiah of Jewish apocalypses, he denationalizes him and describes him as the archetypal Man, who had descended from heaven to earth to redeem men from the sin and death entailed on the race by the Fall of Adam and to found a Kingdom which should include both Jews and Gentiles. This doctrine made the gospel of Paul especially offensive to "the Chosen People." But some of the Gentile Christians carried this idea a step further and identified this heavenly Messiah with the Logos of the Greek philosophy. Converging lines of thought focused on Jesus to glorify him and to make him the object of beliefs concerning which he had said nothing.

These were the first steps of a process that continued to develop in many directions. The portrait of Jesus became a composite, which gained new features with every fresh speculation about him. It was an age of intellectual activity and freedom of thought in which men of diverse theological opinions recognized each other as common disciples. Some churches clung to the Jewish tradition from the Twelve; others followed Paul and still others welcomed the Greek new theology. The spiritual idealism of the Master was a light which glowed in lanterns of many colors. But controversies became acrimonious, as time went on, between the many sects

within the Church and led the first Christian Emperor to make an effort to establish uniformity of belief among his Christian subjects. He undertook the task in Roman fashion. Under his auspices, in 325 A.D., the first universal Council of the churches assembled to legislate upon the truth that ought to be accepted by all. By a majority vote the first great Creed was formulated. Other Councils followed at intervals. Chiefly as a measure to secure political unity and peace, the Imperial authorities undertook to enforce the dogmas of the Councils as laws of the Empire. Dissenters were deprived of civic rights and often sentenced to exile or death. Men who would live comfortably in the world or depart from it with a good hope of heaven must believe as they were commanded. What Roman Imperialism began the Roman Papacy aspired to complete—the subordination of men, body and soul, to a hierarchy claiming infallible authority to declare what men must believe and do to be saved from the wrath of God. The metamorphosis of the religion of Christ had run its course and given birth to the Christian religion.

The development of dogmas involved in this process is defended by the Papacy today, on the ground that Jesus did not teach nor the Bible record *all* that men must believe and do in order to be saved. That task was reserved for the Holy Church under the infallible guidance of the Third Person of the Trinity. That which the Second Person, the Incarnate Son, left obscure, the Third Person expounded. Hence the growth of doctrine was not the work of men but the continuing revelation of God. "Now the Scriptures alone," writes Cardinal Gibbons, "do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe . . . they do not contain all the truths necessary to salvation . . . The Church is the only divinely-constituted teacher of Revelation and in her teaching she is preserved from error by the special guidance of the Holy Ghost."[3]

[3]Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, pp. 85, 97, 111.

The Protestant Reformation was directed against the sacerdotal authority of the priesthood, not against the fundamental dogmas of the creeds. It repudiated an infallibly inspired Church in favor of an infallibly inspired Bible. The way was thus opened for a freer study of the Bible. The Mother Church had grown tolerant of private opinions so long as the faithful outwardly conformed to rites imposed by the hierarchy, but the Reformers in dispensing with these rites placed a new emphasis upon the need of believing the dogmas. Luther, says Harnack, sought to re-discover the original gospel, "but the very man who freed the gospel of Christ from ecclesiasticism strengthened the forces of the latter under the forms of the old Catholic theology, yes, he gave to these forms, which for centuries had lain dormant, once again a value and a meaning. He was the restorer of the old dogmas and he gave them back to faith."[4] As Brewster writes, "The Protestant Reformation came almost two hundred years too soon. It belongs, therefore, to the late Middle Ages instead of to the early modern period, and so is on the wrong side of the gulf that separates the darkness from the light. The practical result is that while the Reformation did clean up a few obvious abuses, it left the entire substructure of medieval thinking untouched."[5]

Inheriting in this way the dogmatic system of the Roman Church, the Protestants emulated the zealous intolerance of Catholics against all dissent from the beliefs they received as orthodox. Whether dissent be directed against a sacramental system or a theological system, it is regarded as a menace to the eternal salvation of men, and it is difficult to see how a logical and consistent orthodoxy of ritual or belief can be anything but intolerant. The spirit bred by dogmatic religion is admirably illustrated by the Inquisitor in Shaw's *Saint Joan*: "Heresy," he says, "begins with people who are

[4]Adolf Harnack: History of Dogma, p. 542.
[5]E. T. Brewster: The Understanding of Religion, p. 129.

to all appearances better than their neighbors . . . they all began with saintly simpletons . . . For two hundred years the Holy Office has striven with these diabolical madnesses; and it knows that they always begin by vain and ignorant persons setting up their judgment against the Church, and taking it upon themselves to be the interpreters of God's will . . . They believe honestly and sincerely that their diabolical inspiration is divine. Therefore you must be on your guard against your natural compassion . . . I say, if you hate cruelty remember that nothing is so cruel in its consequences as the toleration of heresy."[6]

This spirit of intolerance was a heritage of the Protestant churches from the ancient Church along with her creeds. "It is melancholy to note," says Dr. Brown, "the rapidity with which the early simplicity of Protestantism was exchanged for a form of religion ever more complicated and artificial. Under the shelter of the Biblical principle there grew up a new dogma as rigorous and exacting as the old. Side by side with the profession of the universal priesthood of believers there arose a new sacerdotalism no less narrow and intolerant than that which led to the early revolt."[7]

This system of theological dogmas inherited from antiquity and the Middle Ages, became and remains the accredited standard of belief and practice in the churches. With it are associated ethical principles of the highest value and a profound attachment to the teaching and person of Christ. The problem of religious modernism is to preserve and apply in practical life the spiritual principles of the religion of Christ, now that the dogmas of the Christian religion have been discredited by biblical and scientific research.

"Not only have the old theological beliefs crumbled," says Ellwood, "but the theological way of looking at

[6] Bernard Shaw: Saint Joan.
[7] W. A. Brown: The Essence of Christianity, p. 110.

life and at things generally is seen to be of less importance than former generations supposed. The entire edifice of speculative theology has, indeed, been undermined, and by many scientific thinkers it is assigned to the same rank as the mythologies of primitive and barbarous peoples."[8]

Yet no one can think seriously upon the great social and moral problems of life and their practical solution without meeting the profound metaphysical and theological questions which the fathers of the Church sought to answer. As surely as one thinks for himself about the deep mysteries of life and the origin and destiny and duties of man, he will frame for himself some kind of a working theology or religious philosophy of life. The protest of modernists today is not against theology as such but against an obsolete theology that has learned nothing since the Reformation. The doctrine of development, admitted even by the Roman Church, must be accepted without limitations, until every truth that may be verified by reason and observation shall be welcomed as a revelation of God to be used for the education and welfare of men. God is not well-served when fresh truth is feared or suppressed through devotion to traditional opinions that have been sanctified as infallible and thus unchangeable. The trouble has been that the Christian religion has suffered from arrested development. In outliving the age that gave them birth many religious beliefs have lost their vitality and until embodied in new and more valid forms of thought the religion of Christ declines also with them. Christianity survives because successive reformations and heresies burst the old sheaths of dogma and carry forward the religion of Christ into new forms of the Christian religion.

"The history of the Christian religion," writes Dean Mathews, "is one of successive applications of a religious inheritance to new needs. Jewish Christianity

[8]C. A. Ellwood: The Reconstruction of Christianity, p. 12.

fulfilled the hopes of the Jews; patristic Christianity gave metaphysical satisfaction to those who wished for immortality; Roman Christianity gave order and unity to the Western world; Protestantism satisfied the souls that had been touched by the new spirit of nationalism and economic independence. Each advance broke the mortmain of the past and led to reformation . . . Christians have never had a static system of philosophy or a finished theology."[9]

Those who regard the Christian religion as a finished and infallible dogmatic system misunderstand its genius. It is a series of reincarnations of the religion of Christ, each successive body of thought being adapted to the world in which it was born.

Each period overlaps its successor and bequeaths to it a belated quota of old believers who regard it a sacred duty to preserve their ancestral traditions. Ancient errors thus never become quite extinct. They survive all changes and claim a sanctity in proportion to their age. In matters connected with religious customs and beliefs the human race is intensely conservative. Heresy in time itself becomes an orthodoxy and finally orthodoxy survives as a superstition. They who look for a speedy disappearance of traditional forms of faith simply because they have been shown to be irrational or untrue are doomed to disappointment. New truth must struggle long with old beliefs and win the future by slowly proving its right to live.

Progressive Christianity, in contrast with the more reactionary forms of the religion, seeks to embody the principles and ideals of the religion of Jesus in modern life, at the same time releasing men from intellectual bondage to antiquated forms of belief. It would prove all things and hold fast that which is good. Having judged the past it says with Charles W. Eliot: "Taking into consideration all the new demonstrations of

[9]Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, p. 2.

science with regard to the attributes of God, no name so well describes Him as Our Father, among peoples who conceive of a father as the loving head of a family . . . The Church of the future will reverence more and more the personality of Jesus, and will dwell on the extraordinary qualities of his teaching . . . This is a form of Christianity which prefers liberty to authority; sees neither deities nor demons in the processes and forces of nature; deifies no human beings; is not propitiatory, sacrificial nor expiatory; relieves man from irrational terrors; relies on reason and hope; has ministers and pastors but no mediatorial priests; recognizes and resists sins, wrongs and evils; looks death in the face; but dwells chiefly on goodness, life and love."[10]

Those who abandon the ancient creeds are said to deny the fundamentals of the Christian religion. They are accused of merely preaching negations and of having no constructive and positive faith. The ineptness of this charge will appear as we proceed. Here it may be noted that the dogmatic statements of the creeds are themselves based upon negations of a far-reaching character. They first deny what human reason would lead men to affirm and seek to justify this action by quoting an ancient text. Traditional Christianity might be cast into such statements as these:

1. Men must not say that the human race was evolved out of antecedent animal life by a process extending over vast periods of time. They must believe that the first man was a recent and special creation of God, perfect in faculties and noble in life, but that he fell from his first estate and brought death and damnation to his posterity.

2. Men must not say that Jesus was a man normally born nor that he was God without being also man. They must believe that he was both God and man,

[10]Charles W. Eliot: Twentieth Century Christianity, p. 14.

equal to the Father as to his deity, yet very man as to his humanity.

3. Men must not say that God is immanent in all Christlike men in the same manner as in Jesus. They must believe that there was a unique incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity in Jesus and in him only.

4. Men must not say there is one God the Father, and stop there, nor that there is more than one God. They must believe that God is a Society of Three Eternal Equals, who together are unified into One God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

5. Men must not say that human reason is the supreme judge of what is true. They must believe what is taught by the Bible or the Church even though it be contrary to reason.

6. Men must not say that God forgives the sinful man as a father forgives his son when he repents and amends his life. They must believe that He forgives only those who trust in the merits of atoning blood.

7. Men must not say that all punishment here and hereafter is justly proportioned to the guilt of the offender and is applied with a reformatory purpose, nor that the mercy of God extends beyond the grave. They must believe that the wrath of God is endless and implacable, and without corrective purpose, against all who leave this world in a state of sin.

During almost the entire history of the Church, protests have arisen against one part or another of this dogmatic system of denials and negations. In recent years this dissent has extended wherever scientific culture and historical knowledge have revealed errors of belief and judgment from which even the most saintly souls were not guarded. This revolt against old religious beliefs expresses itself in various forms, from the mental reservations of the most cautious Modernist to the outspoken agnosticism of the Ingersollian and the crude atheism of the Bolshevist. We live in a period

of religious transition. Liberal Christians have made their irrevocable choice and stand for a New Protestantism freed from the illusions of infallible authority in Bible or in Church but dedicated to intellectual liberty, social justice and the spiritual life.

When the Christian religion is mentioned, what it still recalls to mind, with the majority of people, is the system of doctrines they were taught in youth, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, his supernatural personality, the articles of the creeds, the miracles, sacramental grace, salvation by atoning blood, the need of a faith in which no doubt of the traditional beliefs may be tolerated; that is, the whole subject is involved immediately in a haze of unreality, magic, and mystery.

"If these things," wrote Foster, "constitute the Christian religion, that religion is already an antiquated affair, a relic that is worthless to the cultivated classes. Christological dogmas really signify for many children of our time a sarcophagus of the personality of Jesus and his religion, and are responsible for the sad ignorance concerning Jesus and the essence of his religion. One casts aside the gold with the dross. One flees from Christology as from a ghost, without ever having seen Jesus . . . In all too many ways, ecclesiastical Christology is a curtain which hides the sun of the life of Jesus. Many a one who would find joy in the sun has seen only the curtain, and carelessly passed by, or been offended. Through the curtain to the sun, from the dogmatic picture of the Christ to the historical picture of Jesus—so much as in us lies . . . We have learned at length that to have faith does not mean to hold a set of opinions; does not even mean to think what Jesus thought. If it be true that every man is a unique miracle in the world . . . then it is true for psychological reasons that one cannot confess what another man has believed, were this other man even Jesus himself. The other man's faith would be no warranty for my faith;

the truth and sincerity of his confession would not prove the truth and sincerity of mine. And Jesus requires no blind faith."[11]

The current opinions of his time and place Jesus did not question. His world of discourse was the same as that of his hearers. That world was a flat expanse roofed by the starry firmament, above which lived God and the angels, while below the earth was the kingdom of the dead. Diseases were caused by demons and Satan was the ruler of the world. The dead would be raised from their graves on the last day and God would judge the world by the Messiah whom he would send. He expressed no doubt concerning the literal accuracy of the Old Testament; to him even the story of Jonah was true history. He was a Jew of the first century and did not know Plato nor indulge in philosophical speculations. His greatness did not depend upon the inerrancy of his opinions. His glory was his character as a MAN. He was the incarnation of an ideal and it is loyalty to that ideal, realized in his person and to be realized in others, that makes men his disciples. As a lover of God and his fellowmen he declared that a good life, dominated by love, is infinitely superior to worldly success or intellectual ability without goodness. He chose his Way of Life and commended it to others as the will of God. He said that if his Way of Life were universally followed it would bring rest to restless souls, joy to the heart, peace and good will to men. We are his disciples, not as we perpetuate the current beliefs of his age, but as we effect in our time and place the spirit of his life. To follow him in this sense is to become sons of God in whom He is well-pleased.

"It has grown increasingly clear to me with the passing years," wrote the venerable Lyman Abbott, "that the radical difference between the teaching of Jesus Christ and that of the churches is this: Jesus taught

[11]G. B. Foster: The Finality of the Christian Religion, pp. 407, 417.

how to live; the churches have taught men what to think; Jesus tested men by their lives; the churches have tested them by their beliefs."[12]

For the purposes of life Jesus did not find it necessary to formulate a complicated creed. "And in fact," says Dr. King, "it is not too much to say upon this that Jesus' entire ethical and religious teaching springs from one single thought, his faith in God as Father. All that he teaches may be said thus to be a direct reflection of his own filial consciousness. This faith in God as Father, this unshakeable conviction that there is love at the heart of the world, and that the universe is on the side of righteousness, this is not merely a religious faith, as we have seen, but the great fundamental moral conviction which is necessary to an earnest and hopeful moral life."[13]

What follows? It follows as Dean Mathews points out, that "Nothing can be fundamentally Christian that is not involved in spiritual loyalty and likeness to the religion instituted by Jesus Christ . . . The test of Christianity is active loyalty to Christ and his message that God is fatherly and that men therefore ought to be and can be brotherly . . . Our new world cannot be made Christian by reliance upon inherited patterns, but upon Christian attitudes and convictions, embodied in the Christian group's life . . . If Christianity is intrinsically a system of doctrines authoritatively fixed in patterns of other times and lacking moral content, it will be abandoned. If the Christian group cannot meet today's need and by its convictions inspire creative forces to make a world of justice and good-will, the church will become a mere social vestige . . ."[14]

The problems of metaphysics, psychology, history and philosophy, important though they are, Jesus left to the researches of others. Their solution is not essential to

[12]Lyman Abbott: What Christianity Means to Me, p. 20.
[13]Henry Churchill King: The Ethics of Jesus, p. 270.
[14]Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, p. 82.

the seeker after goodness. Whatever opinions men might hold, that which is indispensable to their spiritual perfection and inner peace is such faith in God as will inspire them to overcome selfish and sinful desires and to obey the dynamic and redeeming power of love within their hearts. Having once secured peace within and gained right relations with God and men in this way, all other problems will the more easily be solved. Being renewed in the spirit of their minds so as to love what God loves, freed from the bondage of evil passions and able to resist the enticements of a mammonized world, they will enjoy the Reign of God so established in their midst. The Reign of God over men he found to be that of a Father over sons, to be realized by obedience to the spirit of love—a kingdom of righteousness, joy and peace in the spirit. These spiritual ideals formed the essence of his religion.

If a visitor from Mars should inquire concerning the Christian religion, he might be shown "The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion" as a summary of its tenets, and would read such titles as, of Faith in the Holy Trinity; of the Son of God which was made Very Man; of the going down of Christ into Hell; of the Resurrection of Christ; of the Holy Ghost; of Original Sin; of the Sacraments; of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross, etc. He would naturally ask if the Christ-God whom the men of earth worship taught much on these subjects. He would then be surprised to learn that such themes as these did not occupy the attention of the Founder of Christianity. What then did he make the fundamental principles of his religion? In the words of Dr. Brown, "The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the worth of the individual soul, salvation through sacrifice, the kingdom of God as the goal of humanity—these truths, so inexhaustible in their richness and freshness, are seen to be his peculiar contribution to the religious thought of the race . . . All pre-

vious estimates are reversed by the new teacher. For the desire to rule we are given the privilege of service; the greatest becomes the minister; and the path to sovereignty leads by way of the cross."[15]

This visitor would be amazed to learn that the Christian world had come to esteem its own version of the Christian religion more highly than it does the religion of Christ. He might shrewdly suspect a reason and inquire if its own version did not offer some easier means of salvation than obedience to the high ideals of Christ. Nor would he be surprised to learn that its chief evangel had been to show men how to reach a heavenly home rather than how to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, by love, justice and good will, as Jesus had taught.

The fault which Christ found with the Judaism of his own time was not any lack of knowledge concerning the right way of living. The people knew the Golden Rule and believed that love to God and man was the summary of the law and the prophets. But these were neglected because devotion to less important matters was put first. Not the state of the heart nor obedience to the moral law, but the rules, beliefs, sacred rites and postures of a sect settled the question of one's piety. A multitude of extras were added to religion for the purpose of escaping the more irksome quest of the loving and unselfish life. In the spirit of the prophets Jesus attacked these trivialities and trimmings of popular religion, declaring that nothing has such value as real goodness of heart and life. "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" were words that expressed his contempt for the superfluous rules of piety. He drove the concessionaires of the priests from the temple saying, "Ye have made it a den of thieves." To him God was no merchant bartering his blessings for prayers and sacrifices. The penitent pub-

[15] W. A. Brown: The Essence of Christianity, p. 299 ff.

lican was nearer the Kingdom of God than the supercilious and self-righteous Pharisee. The Samaritan heretic ministering to the suffering was more a man after his heart than the priest hurrying to the temple for prayer, but having no compassion of the wounded by the waysides of life. He recalled men away from the complexities of theology and ritual to the simplicities of faith, love, and service.

When the clergy challenged him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders?" they were sincerely concerned, like the opponents of Liberal Christianity today, about the fate of their sacred system and also the safety of Israel if this iconoclast should triumph. In reply he repudiated all obligation to follow the traditions of the past and pointed his remarks with a quotation from Isaiah addressed to "You hypocrites." He said, "Let the dead past bury its dead but come and follow me." He summoned them to find God in the present, not in the past, and to serve Him, not by many prayers and sacrifices, but by showing justice, mercy and kindness to each other.

As Ellwood well says, "In the world-view of Jesus, God was Father, all men were brothers, the relations between God and men and men themselves were essentially the same as the relations of a family. It was a social world-view. Family affection thus was made by Jesus the type and pattern for all relations between men and between God and men. Sacrificial love, such as might be shown by a father toward his children, was to be the redeeming force in our human world. That explained why the new type of life was to be established, therefore, not by physical force, but by faith, hope and love; by gentleness, kindness and mutual service; by the inherent power of truth and right."[16]

These ideals have never been entirely lost sight of in the Christian religion, but like the ideals of the prophets

[16]C. A. Ellwood: Christianity and Social Science, p. 56.

of Israel, they have been buried beneath the traditions of the elders concerning dogmas, rites, sacraments and ecclesiastical machinery.

The loyalty of Christ to his own ideals of life is illustrated by his attitude toward the popular demand that he accept the role of Messiah. His disciples urged him to capitalize his popularity by leading an uprising of the people. Once they came "to take him by force to make him king." It was a great tribute to him. Whether he actually believed himself to be Messiah or unauthorized beliefs of the disciples have colored their narratives about him in that respect is a disputable question. In either case, however, we are left in no doubt as to his attitude toward becoming an occupant of the throne of David.

Jesus lived in a period of intense nationalism. Judea was the Ireland of the Roman Empire. Religion and patriotism united to keep the fires of hatred burning in the hearts of the people. They longed above all things for deliverance from their military overlords. Their secret prayer may be found in "The Assumption of Moses"—"Behold, O Lord and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, that he may reign over Israel, thy servant. And gird him with strength that he may shatter unrighteous rulers and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction." The literature of the period shows that "it was a victorious warrior and just ruler, a king restoring independence to Israel and giving it dominion over the world, that the Jews of the Roman period prayed for and expected."[17] The kingdom of God then meant the triumph of Israel over all other nations through the divine intervention and the inspired wisdom and military genius of Messiah. In this way should justice, peace and goodness be established on earth.

"All this," as Simkhovitch shows, "from the view-

[17] N. Schmidt: The Prophet of Nazareth, p. 92.

point of Christ's intellectual insight was futile nonsense; for no external act could solve this or any other situation. One could not enter the kingdom of heaven without a rebirth in spirit . . . The kingdom of heaven was but an inner change in us."[18]

In opposing this hope for a warlike Messiah who should inaugurate the kingdom of God by force, Jesus stood alone. He was a Jewish Gandhi who could not convince his own disciples that he was right. If they would have him for their Messiah or Christ, he would define the conditions. Men must first receive the kingdom of God in their own hearts by obedience to the will of God, their true King. But they had the Old Testament faith in a Jehovah, who would fight for the chosen people and lead them to victory as in the days of Moses and David. Their swords were ready for the word of command to begin the holy war.

We must keep this in mind if we would understand the religion of Christ as he practiced it. In the sacred "Eddas" of our Norse ancestors the state of the world is pictured:

> "Force rules the world, Has ruled it, shall rule it;
> Meekness is weakness, Strength is triumphant;
> Over the whole earth Still is Thor's day. .
> Brothers slay brothers' Sisters' children,
> Sensual sin grows huge, There are sword ages, axe ages,
> Shields cleft in twain, Storm ages, murder ages,
> Till the world falls dead And men no longer spare
> Or pity one another."[19]

How may the sword ages be ended? "By the conquering Messiah," replied Israel. "Let all men submit to the throne of David and obey God's Anointed." But Jesus answered, "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." The God he served was neither Mars, Thor nor Jehovah. He was the Father of men, who would have all men voluntarily submit to His loving will that they might dwell together in peace.

[18] V. Simkhovitch: Toward an Understanding of Jesus, p. 65.
[19] R. B. Anderson: Norse Mythology, pp. 301, 417.

God would not be served by conquered slaves but by sons. When crowned with thorns and derisively hailed as "King of the Jews," this teacher of a new social order met his fate with silent dignity. He had said, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." He refused to use the weapons of the world and denied that the Reign of God could be imposed by force.

He declared that neither hatred nor ambition, nor priestly nor royal power, armed with the sword, could cure the ills of the world. It was not in the Roman Caesar nor in the Jewish Messiah to do it. He revived the old prophetic faith, "Not by might, nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord." What did this mean?

This meant that the Reign of God, of which the seers had dreamed, could be realized among men only by the eradication of malice, hatred, revenge, lust, pride, greed, selfishness from the hearts of all, by obedience to a divine spirit of love that had taken up its abode in them. The throne of a Caesar, with obedient legions to enforce his decrees, he would refuse as a temptation of the devil. A Jewish Empire under the scepter of a royal Messiah would by no improvement on the Roman, if founded by the same methods of coercion and dependent on force. Men must themselves be changed before social conditions and government can be improved. They must learn to love not themselves only and to be loyal to their own tribe, but to love their enemies also. He refused to sanction violence as a means to a renewed humanity. He warned his disciples against the fallacy of expecting a successful war to end war and to destroy the spirit that causes war. The hearts of men must be disarmed by a new spirit within. He foresaw the failure of men to respond to his appeal, but stood his ground and was crucified on the false charge that he was secretly plotting against the government. He

died with courage and won the kind of homage from the world, that is able to admire his principles without practicing them.

Nevertheless, the patriotic hope refused to die. His Jewish disciples concluded that its fulfillment was only deferred. The New Testament closes with a lurid picture of the returning Messiah, followed by legions of warriors. The writer summons the vultures to feast on the bodies of the slain. A revamped Jewish Apocalypse —the most unchristian book of the Church. Yet some Christian preachers still wax eloquent over its picture of the Coming Christ, riding to Empire through "the gushing blood of a trampled world."

When his companions coveted high offices in the kingdom of Messiah, Jesus rebuked them. Instead of promising them seats of power he washed their feet. "You know," he said, "that the so-called rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant." His Sermon on the Mount demonstrates his meaning. They must receive in order to give. They must forgive if they would be forgiven. They must go the second mile and begrudge no service that would help others. They must be more than just; they must be generous. They must love in order to be loved. The treatment they desired from God and others they must give. If they would have peace they must not fight. Such injunctions alienated many who had hoped that he might be Messiah.

Herein was the tragedy of Christ's life. He was not in harmony with the public opinion of his time. Some were offended by his neglect of traditional religion. Others were alienated by his lack of patriotism. He enraged the priests, infuriated the Pharisees, and disappointed his own disciples. He could not be used as a tool of any party. To the patriots he was a weakling, to the priests a heretic, to the scribes a fool, to

the Romans a fanatic. A few were attached to him by personal affection, but they left him to bear his cross alone to Calvary, dying for principles that the world is not yet ready to obey.

Should tyranny never be resisted by force? Should the wicked not be punished? Can justice be enforced without the sword? Did Jesus prescribe a special code of conduct good only for the brief time that, according to many, would elapse before the end of the world? Such questions we cannot here discuss. But it is worthy of note that he did not denounce the criminal laws of the nation, nor rail against governments, seeming to take it for granted that society must organize to offer legal resistance to evil. Probably he would have agreed with Paul that it is the duty of the State to protect its citizens against wrong: "The powers that be are ordained of God. For rulers are a terror not to the good work but to the evil."

But the eyes of Jesus were turned to the spiritual root of evil. He recommends men to lay aside all private retaliation and revenge that the mercy of God may reign in their hearts. Self-defense may require society to resist evil and punish the wrong-doers, but that does not end evil. Like an unhealed sore it still remains. Something greater than this is required, the reformation of the evilly disposed. Until the hand that smites with justice has love behind it, seeking the welfare of the offender and the reformation of his conduct for his own good, the evil is unconquered. Hence Jesus goes behind all judicial administration of law to describe the spirit of individuals who would act like God. After an evil-doer has been lashed he has not been conquered. How may he be brought to repentance? That was the problem in the mind of Christ. Retaliatory suffering, however just, would not do it. Only the spirit that suffers long and is kind will win. So while justice may demand self-defense, love imposes self-sacrifice. Justice

may restrain evil, only love can conquer it in the heart. To retaliate is human, to forgive divine. Acting on these principles Christ became the spiritual Leader of all who would save the world from sin by the self-sacrifices and services of love.

One may object that such a religion is visionary and impracticable. But Christ believed that though evil were hewn to pieces by the sword of justice each fragment would retain enough vitality to reproduce itself. Such methods are inadequate. It would be like punishing the victims of smallpox as a cure for the disease. Evil must be overcome by the radiant generosity of goodness. He who would serve the kingdom of God must be willing to sacrifice his malice, greed, revenge for the sake of others and give the mercy to others that he hopes to receive for himself. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is like a man who founded his house upon a rock."

There has never been a Christian nation; there have been only Christian individuals who have had faith enough in Christ to practice what he taught. The sword ages of the world brought only terror and misery to mankind, and now we have reached the bombing and poison-gas age. Crime waves still sweep the world in spite of repressive laws. The consequences of evil mankind will continue to suffer until men more generally learn to admit that the Prophet of Nazareth was right and, in the spirit of mutual compassion and mercy, seek to eradicate the root of evil in the heart. In the accomplishment of the end he had in view, every contribution that the biological, psychological and social sciences can offer should be welcomed. The evolution of man to higher spiritual and social life is the problem of salvation. The ideals of Christ were offered for realization in this world and if the sciences can help to remove obstacles in the way of an era of universal good-will and peace, they may prove to be more effective

allies of his kingdom than many a tradition, rite and dogma.

Jesus was fully conscious of the danger of trying to practice his religion in a world dominated by selfishness. He said to his followers, "I send you forth as sheep into the midst of wolves." For the sake of spiritual gain they must be willing to suffer material loss. An honest man will suffer among thieves, a tender heart among the cruel and a pacifist among brawlers. A price must be paid for moral excellence. "Even so," he seemed to say, "love must suffer if love would win." He made the cross on which he suffered, the symbol of his religion—not because thereon he expiated before God the guilt of men and paid the price for their forgiveness—but because it signified the only means by which the world can be saved from evil. The sinner can be saved only by the self-sacrifices of the good, the ignorant by the ministries of the wise, the weak by the help of the strong.

The word "love" carries with it so many associations of sex and sentiment, passion and folly, that its essential meaning is often obscured. "At its purest and best," says an eminent sociologist, "love is the valuing of persons for their own sakes without any material benefits to ourselves in view. It is a social attitude of unselfish and passionate devotion to the welfare of others. It is this purified love of which religion speaks, and which the scientific sociologist must sooner or later recognize as the essentially redemptive motive in our human world."[20] To this motive power within, Christ entrusted the triumph of his religion. And he believed that God was in that power winning men unto Himself.

In the religion of Christ is nothing obsolete, effeminate or weak. It is strength consecrated to the highest social ends, from the noblest motives, reenforced by an invincible courage. He would found no Islam by the sword,

[20] C. A. Ellwood: Christianity and Social Science, p. 117.

but would lead men of their own free will into the Kingdom of God on earth through the experiences and services of love. His religion runs contrary to all the priestly and political traditions of the world. With sublime audacity he offered it to men, baptizing it with his own blood and summoned men to follow him.

To many who crave mystery and magic, solemn pomp and pageantry, the religion of Christ seems to be no religion at all. They exclaim "it is just a way of living." That is true. He called it a Way of Life. The Church has said, "Learn first what to believe"; Christ said, "Learn first how to live." His injunction was, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another." The unbelief that keeps men from walking in this way is not their denial of any dogma of the Church or their rejection of any text of Scripture; it is lack of faith and courage to take up the cross of self-denying service which goes with following Christ in his Way of Life. He said, "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father, in the spirit of loving service, the same is my brother, my sister and my mother." His is a religion of sublime affirmations regarding the value and meaning of the spiritual life attainable by men, an ethical philosophy whose principles, were they applied, would revolutionize the world. Liberal Christians believe that it is greater than dogmatic Christianity, which indeed may become one of the greatest impediments to its success.

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIAN CREED AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"From scheme and creed the light goes out,
The saintly fact survives;
The blessed Master none can doubt
Revealed in holy lives."

WHITTIER.

The creeds of the churches represent a radical departure from the principles of Christ. As Dean Hatch has shown, they were "speculations and speculations of a majority at certain meetings."[1] In view of their history, the words of Dr. Henry are none too strong: "And it was not merely that the Christian religion was changed from a principle of life to a metaphysical creed; it makes the matter worse that the creators of Christian theology were not original thinkers and could only adopt and adapt to their uses a decadent and defective philosophy, the incoherent Greco-Oriental eclecticism current in their day . . . To this it came; the life of faith, of trust in God and loyalty to Christ, was displaced by intellectual acceptance of a system of doctrine bearing the name of Christian, but in spirit and in method and largely in substance borrowed from the heathen; and upon its acceptance salvation depended. Not the practice of virtue but the profession of faith was the essential thing, for sin was pardonable, but not error. This metamorphosis of a religion which claimed Jesus for its founder is the one triumphant Christian heresy, none the less a heresy because it arrogates to itself the name of orthodoxy and brands as heretical any departure from the standards it has itself set up and pronounced authoritative . . . And when that Creed was made the an-

[1]Edwin Hatch: Hibbert Lectures, 1888, p. 330.

swer to the question, "What is Christianity?" an astute hierarchy sucked thereout no small advantage. It was not by preaching the love of God and the love of man, but by enforcing creedal conformity that it built up its power, and history has no darker page than that which records the fierce persecution of dissident belief."[2]

So effective was this discipline that even yet men are almost universally named Christian on account of their beliefs rather than on account of their lives. Their creed and not their character is the standardized test. The scoundrel who dies professing the authorized faith is admitted into the Christian ranks; a Darwin, after an unblemished and noble life, is not a Christian because he lacks the "true faith."

"The religion of Christ thus underwent the greatest change of all," writes Wernle. "The practical and personal no longer formed as they did before, the core and center of the faith. Originally the true marks of Christianity were the ardor of its hope, the strictness of the new life, inspiration for Jesus. Whosoever suffered himself to be redeemed by Jesus so as to attain the freedom of a child of God was accounted a Christian. No one inquired as to the dogmas he accepted. And so the oldest community was a fellowship united by the same enthusiasm and working for the same ends. This conception of Christianity was supplanted in the course of the struggle with Gnosticism by the scholastic dogmatic view."[3] As a result of this change, the spiritual values emphasized by Christ began to be neglected by those who accepted the system of belief authorized by the ruling majority of the leaders of the Church.

After laborious study, James Martineau, recognized as one of the most powerful minds of the last century, was forced with "pain and dismay" to the conclusion "that Christianity, as defined and understood in all the

[2]Francis A. Henry: Jesus and the Christian Religion, p. 261 ff.
[3]Paul Wernle: Beginnings of Christianity, II, p. 241.

Churches which formulate it, has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources; from what is unhistorical in its traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed . . . all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dreams, or popular apotheosis. And so nearly do these vain imaginations preoccupy the creeds that not a moral or spiritual element finds entrance there except the 'forgiveness of sins.' But he reaches the further conclusion, "that Christianity, understood as the personal religion of Jesus Christ, stands clear of all the perishable elements and realizes the true relation between man and God."[4]

Those educated to believe the traditional dogmas find it difficult to admit that one may be a Christian without subscribing to their creed. That seems to them to be contrary to the fundamentals of their religion. Yet as Harnack says: "The gospel is no theoretical system of doctrine or philosophy of the universe; it is doctrine only so far as it proclaims the reality of God, the Father. It is a glad message assuring of life eternal, and telling what the things and forces with which we have to do are worth."[5]

The gospel of orthodoxy was of slow growth. It was, as Bowne says, the result of "an incongruous compound of inconsistent speculations and halting exegesis."[6] "To find our present theological system in the first century, said Tyrrell, "is as hopeless as to find our present civilization there . . . Even to show that the present doctrinal system was contained logically in the admissions of the first centuries means a torturing of texts and documents incompatible with any sort of historical sincerity."[7]

[4]James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 716.
[5]Adolf Harnack: What is Christianity? p. 150.
[6]B. P. Bowne: Studies in Christianity, p. 40.
[7]George Tyrrell: Christianity at the Crossroads, p. 28.

In proportion to the consistency with which men are excluded from the Kingdom of God for their failure to accept the beliefs of the churches, the teaching of Christ is sacrificed to theological prejudice or ecclesiastical arrogance. "It is often said," wrote Matthew Arnold, "that if Jesus Christ came now his religion would be rejected. And this is only another way of saying that the world now, as the Jewish people formerly, has something which thwarts and confuses its perception of what righteousness really is. It is so; and the thwarting cause is the same now as then—the dogmatic system current, the so-called orthodox theology."[8]

The distinction between doctrine and dogma should be kept in mind. Doctrine is personal belief; dogma is doctrine officially imposed by an institution. A church becomes dogmatic when it legislates a creed into existence and demands belief upon authority alleged to be divine. Every intelligent man will form his own doctrinal opinions and their value depends upon his freedom from dogmatic coercion. If he is pledged in advance to the defense of a system of dogmas, he consents to fetter his liberty of thought and agrees that his own doctrines and the dogmas of the church he serves shall not come into conflict. Clear doctrinal thinking is of priceless value and we need more of it; but dogmatic authority, which seeks to preserve sacred traditions from criticism or penalizes the discovery of new truth, is pernicious and intolerable to free minds.

"Dogma," says Moore, "is doctrine which instead of being authoritative because it creates conviction seeks to create conviction because it is authoritative. Dogma is doctrine made binding, not upon those to whom its truth is obvious, but upon all and always, and simply because the institution or the consensus of its adherents said that it should be binding."[9] The only dogma that

[8]Matthew Arnold: Literature and Dogma, p. 357.
[9]E. C. Moore: The New Testament in the Christian Church, p. 274.

Liberal Christianity is prepared to accept is that men should be free from dogmas. Having perfect liberty to do their own thinking, they may bring their personal beliefs into conformity with every truth they learn, without fear of offending deity or danger of forfeiting any of the spiritual values, which alone were emphasized by Christ.

A dogmatic religion is, however, a welcome relief to the average man. Accepting the voice of authority he can believe what he has been taught and find comfort in the thought that if it be in error at any point he is not responsible. "The plain man" says Muir, "welcomes dogmatic certitude, guaranteed by authority. He accepts with joy an authority which seems to be definite, but is really vague. He delights in phrases which all of his kind can recite, while each attaches to them his own indeterminate meaning. How admirably do theological dogmas fulfill these conditions . . . Dogmas seem sharp, definite statements of facts, conceptions, beliefs; they really encourage each interpreter to find behind them the essential truth he has himself placed there . . . But one must pay for luxurious delights. Realities become unreal; changelessness is the longed-for goal. Vivifying thinking stops. As Bishop Westcott has said, "Art becomes photography, and faith is represented by a phrase."[10]

Mill speaks of the incomputable loss which the world has suffered through the timidity of men, whose intellectual development has been arrested by the fear of heresy. Overawed by the prestige of established dogmas, they dared not be true to their own independent thinking, preferring the safety of conformity to the insecurity of freedom. "Among them," he says, "we may occasionally see some man of deep conscientiousness, and subtle and refined understanding, who spends his life in sophisticating with an intellect he cannot silence, and

[10]Pattison Muir: Art. in Hibbert Journal, July, 1912.

exhausts the resources of ingenuity in attempting to reconcile the promptings of his conscience and reason with orthodoxy, which yet he does not, perhaps, to the end succeed in doing. No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think."[11]

Dogmatic Christianity has adapted itself to this frailty of the average human mind. Intellectual freedom and progress has been sacrificed to institutional aggrandizement. But the church was organized to develop men, not men to develop a church. "From the standpoint of religious education" says Coe, "the hardening of Christianity into a dogmatic and ecclesiastical system cannot be regarded otherwise than as a backward step . . . Instead of seeking to develop the individual from within through free self-expression, it presented a rigid, authoritative system to which he was required to conform; it put undue emphasis upon the intellectual apprehension of dogma . . . The dogmatic view makes the acceptance of a creed a preliminary to Christian living; the vital view puts life first, and makes the creed a product and expression of life."[12]

A creed is like a breakwater behind which men are condemned to anchor in fancied security. Adventurous souls who would explore the open sea of truth are treated as mutineers. The old landmarks must be kept in sight. "Safety first" is emblazoned on the ensign and the reports of hardy explorers into the regions beyond are compared with the age-yellow charts of Israel and denounced as false.

The combined effect of attempts to confine the re-

[11]John Stuart Mill: On Liberty, Chap. 2.
[12]George A. Coe: Education in Religion and Morals, pp. 377, 389.

ligious opinions of men within dogmatic boundaries has been a widespread alienation of the best minds from the Christian movement and a deplorable misunderstanding of its main purpose. "Since the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century," says Rauschenbusch, "dogma came to be regarded as the essence of Christianity. A man must assent to the true doctrine, and if he held that, the fundamental requirement of religion was fulfilled . . . The polemic bitterness and intolerance engendered by the dogmatism of the church have been anti-social forces of the first magnitude."[13]

Such a statement explains in some measure the hostility of religious liberals to the orthodox system. Their directly opposite way of showing how much importance they attach to what a man believes is to guarantee him perfect freedom for sincerity and self-expression within the limits set by Christian standards of character and conduct. An intellectual prison is not the best place for the cultivation of the Christian virtues.

With all due respect to the good intentions of saintly souls, who have settled down into voluntary bondage to antiquity, candor forces one to say with Jacks, "Christianity, in the official or authorized presentation of it, is a smothered religion; smothered almost to the point of total asphyxiation and collapse, but not quite; smothered by the vested interests of great institutions, and by the ambitions, fears and self-seekings that such interests breed; smothered by the elaborate theological defenses Christians have built, not against Antichrist, but against each other." He goes on to add, "Christianity has an unauthorized version, which the other, (the authorized) has often repressed, persecuted and condemned to the hangman and the eternal flames . . . It is the unauthorised version which has kept Christianity alive through the ages and defied the smotherers to this

[13] W. Rauschenbusch: Christianity and the Social Crisis, pp. 178, 179.

day."[14] This unauthorised version, commonly called heresy, Liberal Christians would make the soul of the New Reformation. As Fosdick said in his farewell sermon in New York, "They call me a heretic. I am proud of it. I wouldn't live in a generation like this and be anything but a heretic."[15]

Lyman Abbott has told us that in his youth he admired the kind of life that he saw in his parents and says, "to get that life I thought I must understand and accept the creed of the church to which they belonged. I thought to find it a gateway to Christ. Instead, I found it a barbed-wire entanglement."[16] And such the creeds have become to intelligent youth of both sexes. To demand that the spiritual life be sought by way of the old beliefs is like making the use of tallow candles compulsory by every college student.

The Great War exposed to many the failure of such barbed-wire entanglements. They have said with Galsworthy, "When this war is over and reason resumes its sway, our dogmas will be found to be scored through forever. Whatever else may be the outcome of this business, let us at least realize the truth—it is the death of dogmatic Christianity. Let us will that it be the birth of a God within us and an ethic Christianity that men will really practise . . . Its creed will be a noiseless and passionate conviction that man can be saved, not by a far-away despotic God, but only by the divine element in man, God within the human soul."[17] Such is the faith that survives revolt against the ancient dogmas.

Today as never before, serious laymen, like Glenn Frank, challenge the Church to reorganize its forces on new principles, to modernize its vocabulary and to concentrate attention on the ethical and social problems of

[14]L. P. Jacks: Religious Perplexities, p. 73.
[15]H. E. Fosdick: Art. in Christian Work, March 14, 1925.
[16]Quoted by Durant Drake: Shall We Stand by the Church? p. 126.
[17]John Galsworthy: A Sheaf, p. 225, 226.

life. "Substitute the religion of Jesus for Christianity," he writes. "Most intelligent folk realize, I think, that three-fourths of our traditional theological doctrines bear little, if any, direct relation to the religion of Jesus. The religion of Jesus is not the doing of special things but the doing of all things in a special way."[18]

Modernists are busy moving the dogmatic artillery to the rear in many churches, though not prepared to scrap it entirely. By skillful camouflage it may be serviceable still, not in warfare on those without, but in reassuring the timid within, the fold. The Fundamentalists, however, oppose this strategy and volunteer to man the old guns at the front and keep them in action. They fear defeat of the armies of God if they are not guarded by their creeds. That anyone should presume to serve God without a pledge to maintain unchanged the authorized version of Christianity fills them with dismay. Those who serve in the ranks must learn to pronounce correctly their sectarian shibboleths to qualify for a commission. Advancement is made to depend upon loyalty to the faith "once delivered to the saints."

But a New Protestantism is rising, with broadened vision, which says with Principal Garvie: "In spite of the prominence of ethics in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, the Christian Church has hitherto paid more attention to dogmatics, the definition of the objects of faith, than to ethics, the exposition of the ideals of life. We now think of Christianity, not as a creed to be believed, a code to be obeyed, a ritual to be observed, but as a life to be lived."[19]

If this be true, a new conception of the Christian Church is the need of the times. It should be one that will attract and include all who agree with its spiritual ideals of life, and exclude none for theological reasons only. "Church history informs us," says Abbott, "that creeds

[18]Glenn Frank: Art, in the Century, Aug., 1923.
[19]A. E. Garvie: The Christian Certainty. pp. 26, 137.

have been made for the purpose, not of including all Christlike spirits, but of excluding all of unorthodox opinions."[20] The church of the New Reformation would change this practice.

The Roman Church, being the most rigidly dogmatic of all, has been the most consistently exclusive. Protestant churches, though seeking to maintain loyalty to the old creeds, have been embarrassed by their principle of the right of private judgment and thus have been forced to many compromises. The Liberal Christian, however, may be consistently inclusive. With unperturbed patience he can say of his theological antagonist:

> "He drew a circle to shut me out.
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,
> But Love and I had the wit to win,
> We drew a circle that took him in."

The free churches associated under the Unitarian name have cherished this liberal and inclusive ideal of Christianity for more than a century. Others are here and there catching the vision which led Channing in 1811 to declare, "By his Church our Saviour does not mean a party bearing the name of a human leader, distinguished by a form or an opinion, and on the ground of this distinction, denying the name and character of Christians to all but themselves. He means by it the body of his friends and followers, who truly imbibe his spirit, no matter by what name they are called, in what house they worship, by what peculiarities of mode and opinion they are distinguished, under what sky they live, or what language they speak. These are the true church—men made better, made holy, virtuous by his religion—men who, hoping in his promises, keep his commands."[21]

Until recent years all advocates of this view have been objects of persistent persecution. For fourteen hundred years they were under the ban. Disobedient to ec-

[20] Lyman Abbott: What Christianity Means to Me, p. 180.
[21] W. H. Channing: Channing's Life, one vol. ed., p. 170.

clesiastical authority they have adhered to the unauthorized religion of Christ. When it was dangerous to claim liberty of thought in religion, they dared to affirm that right both for themselves and others. They declared that no doctrinal disbelief can separate a man from the love of God, but only his voluntary choice of evil. "We owe the modern principle of toleration," says Bury "to the Italian group of Reformers, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and were the fathers of Unitarianism."[22]

In the kindlier atmosphere of the modern world this hostility has to some extent abated, though it is still violent in some quarters. The avowed heretic now may often find a welcome in churches whose creeds he does not believe. He is even invited into membership and informed that he need not believe the official creed of the church which he is asked to join. This courtesy, however, carries with it a necessary embarrassment, for he is tolerated not as a teacher of what he believes to be the truth but as a disciple and supporter of what he believes to be false doctrine. He is expected to refrain from propagating his own heresy. Therefore, Liberal Christians, however much they may honor those who differ from them, see no way out of their predicament except to establish and sustain their own societies to propagate the principles they believe to be right and true. By loyalty to these they can, without evasion, silence, or subterfuge, best serve the truth as they see it. At the same time they gain, by organization, more effective means of coöperation in all good works with others holding different beliefs and traditions. The various sects thus prove their usefulness by making it possible for those holding the same opinions to unite in congenial companies or regiments, all serving in the same great army. A union of all would probably create more dissension that it would cure. Loyalty to one's

[22] J. B. Bury: History of Freedom of Thought, p. 93.

own intellectual and social group need not inhibit the larger loyalty to common spiritual ideals and human welfare, which all who desire a better world may coöperate to realize.

Neither heresy nor orthodoxy, ritualism nor rationalism are ends in themselves but have value only as they lead men into sincere and Christian lives. And he after whom the highest type of life is named was nurtured to manhood in a Jewish synagogue.

In saying that only they shall inherit the Kingdom of God who do the will of God, Jesus but repeated the teaching of the synagogue. "Sin and repentance," says Herford, "occupy a very large place in Pharisaic theology; and the reason is that Pharisaism as a religion turns wholly on doing God's will. Sin was disobeying the divine will, the defiance or disregard or neglect of what God had commanded."[23] But what had God commanded? In answering this question Jesus took issue with the Pharisees, as he might also with many of his own followers at the present time. The rabbis, he believed, had overlaid the real commands of God with the traditions of men and made their rules of piety even more binding than the weightier matters of love and justice. They tithed the garden herbs, brought their sacrifices to the altar, punctiliously observed the Sabbath, but showed less zeal in cleansing their hearts from greed, malice, and selfishness. Ritualism, formalism, legalism, orthodoxy were mistaken for the will of God and the machinery of religion was esteemed more highly than the spiritual life. He rebuked their blindness, demanded repentance and obedience, but declared that the will of God is fulfilled only as the heart is cleansed from selfishness and vitalized with divine love. Here was a righteousness "exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees," the inward rightness of the heart responsive to every call for kindness and service

[23] R. Travers Herford: The Pharisees, p. 163.

It was this sure insight of Jesus into what is essential and universal that adapts his religion to the deepest needs of man. It is broader than all sectarianism and greater than organized Christianity itself. It rebukes the narrow Pharisaism of every age and of every exclusive orthodoxy, by identifying the will of God with the moral order in which Love is the fulfilling of the law. In the presence of Christ all intellectual, social, and racial pride is humbled and we learn with a great disciple that "Love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

"Christians," as Dole says, "find the lines of a religion of humanity, deeper than changing creeds, in the heart of India, in Japan, in the land of Confucius . . . Where good will acts, God acts through his children; where good will is, morality and religion are one, mighty, irresistible, victorious."[24]

This principle has been the spiritual principle at the heart of Christianity from the beginning, though often buried beneath much theological rubbish. It is the "unauthorized version" of the Christian religion of which Jacks speaks. It is the secret of Christlike living in every age and nation. When this spirit of good will is incarnated in human personality the Kingdom of God is extended. By it the heathen at home and abroad are attracted to a higher life. Unresponsive to a creed they are drawn by the ministries of love. Sin is overcome by the contagion of unselfish lives.

After long experience in the mission field, Howard Bliss plainly told the church that this principle of Liberal Christianity is the need of the nations. He said: "What then is the missionary's message? It is the proclamation of the religion of Jesus as disclosed in his

[24]Chas. F. Dole: The Ethics of Progress, pp. 397, 398.

teaching and exemplified in his career . . . Faith in a loving, wise, righteous and holy God; faith in self, faith in mankind, faith in truth, in love, in righteousness—this fulfils the conditions of the Catholic faith . . . Not belief in this miracle or that, not belief in any miracle at all, is the sine qua non of Christian discipleship . . . His concern is something deeper, something more vital, than questions of theological and metaphysical speculation, relating to the Person and Work of Christ, to the Virgin Birth, to the fine distinctions between the humanity, the divinity and the deity of Jesus, to the nature of the Trinity, to the atonement. Upon just one thing he insists—the personal assimilation of the disciple's life to the teaching and spirit of Jesus . . . So our missionary bids his hearers formulate their thoughts of Christ in their own way, providing they retain the authority of his leadership."[25]

One of the ablest observers in India reached the same conclusion, in which probably the most effective missionaries would concur. He says, "The obstacles which a certain type of Christian theology puts in the way of the spread of the Christian religion are not due primarily to the missionary but to us Christians at home who allow our living religion to be identified with a collection of half-dead dogmas." He believes that the mission field offers an opportunity to free Christianity from the dogmas which have served their day and are no longer of any real service, but must in the future more and more prove fetters and chains to its real progress . . . We have seen how great an obstacle some of these ancient dogmas are to the conversion of the intelligent Indians, and it seems extremely unlikely that we shall ever be able to convert any large number of them to a belief in our medieval creeds . . . If we allow Christianity to be identified in the minds of the non-Christian world with a mass of scholastic subtle-

[25]Howard S. Bliss: Art in the Atlantic Monthly, May, 1920.

ties and medieval dogmas, we shall have nothing to blame for it but our own cowardice." He concludes that Christianity must be identified "with the spirit of Christ," for "the missionary spirit is the spirit of loving service."[26] That which is true in India is rapidly becoming true even in lands where these ancient dogmas form a part of the national tradition and history.

The distinction of Christianity is not its emphasis upon the duty of men to do the will of God, but in Christ's exposition of what the will of God requires. He finds the love of God at the heart and source of all life and declares that it is within human power to embody it in the individual experience and obey it in all social relations. Through experience of this truth men of the most diverse creeds may arrive at spiritual unity, for "God is love and whosoever abideth in love abideth in God and God abideth in him." This is the unity of the spirit which may exist between men in the midst of diversity of beliefs.

Tolstoi renounced the orthodox creeds but kept the faith in finding that "Where love is God is." John Wesley had a complicated theology, which often embarrassed his liberal heart, but wrote, "The heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is in effect nothing else."[27] Channing, the heretic, reached the same goal by another route: "To do the will of our Heavenly Father is the great work of earthly existence. To prefer universal rectitude, the boundless love of God and man, the perfect life before all other good, is the only true wisdom, the only real worship."[28]

May we not go further along this line? Lewis says, "A man is truly 'saved' in precisely the degree in which the Christ-spirit is regnant within him . . . The spirit

[26] James B. Pratt: India and its Faiths, pp. 462, 461, 441, 459 ff.
[27] John Wesley: Christian Perfection, p. 69.
[28] William E. Channing: The Perfect Life, p. 314.

of Christ consists essentially in perfect sonship of God and perfect brotherhood to men."[29] That sonship and brotherhood are the fruits of the divine love within, which is called in honor of Christ, the Christ-spirit. If this be true can the truly "saved" be confined within the limits of certain sects or even within the boundary lines of Christian traditions? Have none realized filial relations with God and brotherhood toward men except these? Is God the God of the Jews or of the Christians only? Acquaintance with the noble souls of another historical heritage tends to banish the superstitious reverence of ourselves as "a chosen people." Is it not true that wherever the spirit of Christ be found, among those of any creed or race given to aspirations after moral purity and acts of self-sacrificing love, there will be found a part of the family of God? Christ would recognize his brethren, not by the names they bear nor by the religious system they have found helpful to them, nor by the creeds they repeat, but solely by the character they possess. "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father, in the spirit of love, trust and good will, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother."

Not all the Jews were materialistic sticklers for the trifles of their law. Montefiore testifies that "there was in the Rabbinic literature from the first century onwards a passionate love for God, a passionate love for His law, and a very real love of neighbor."[30] And this spirit must have frequently been expressed in deed as well as in words. Is it necessary to doubt that characters of this stamp might be numbered among the brethren of Christ and welcomed among the "truly saved"?

If we were to go to India we should find many who saw the glory of the spiritual life much as Jesus saw it. Though associated with other religious traditions and beliefs, Buddha said, "The charitable man has found the

[29]Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 23.
[30]Quoted by Jackson and Lake: Beginnings of Christianity, p. 79 ff.

path of salvation . . . Loving and compassionate he gives with reverence and banishes hatred, anger and envy. The immortal can only be reached by continuous acts of kindliness, and perfection is accomplished by compassion and charity."[31] Of the principles of Gandhi, who definitely rejects the dogmas of the Christian religion to worship God in a heathen temple, it is said, "They throb with an active spirit of sacrifice and the pure love that inspires the saints."[32] "Religion," says the Brahmo Samaj, "is at bottom a loving, living, personal relationship with God. It is the outpouring of the love of the child toward the Father . . . There are two essentials of worship, love and service; love which flows out of service and service which is inspired by the love of God."[33] "O God, my Father," prays Tagore, "the world of sins remove from me . . Break all the sins, the cravings of self, and own me as your child. From love the world was born, by love it is sustained, toward love it moves."[34] "We are living," says Mrs. Besant, the theosophist, "in an ocean of light, of love, of bliss, that surrounds us all the time, the life of God. We shut that light out of our consciousness by our selfishness, our heartlessness, our impurity, our intolerance."[35] In the Mahabharata it is written:

> "This is the sum of all true righteousness—
> Treat others as thou wouldst thyself be treated;
> Do nothing to thy neighbor which hereafter
> Thou wouldst not have thy neighbor do to thee."[36]

Quoting words similar to these, Jesus said, "This is the law and the prophets." Not a few have there been in all lands and creeds, like Katz Awa, the Japanese statesman, of whom a missionary said, "Not a Christian indeed; yet possessing more of the essential characteris-

[31]Paul Carus: The Gospel of Buddha, p. 63.
[32]Romain Rolland: Art. in the Century, Jan., 1924.
[33]Hem Chandra Charkar: The Religion of the Brahmo Samaj, p. 40.
[34]Rabindrinath Tagore: Personality, p. 196.
[35]Annie Besant: Esoteric Christianity, p. 319.
[36]James B. Pratt: India and its Faiths, p. 98.

tics of the lowly Nazarene than I have elsewhere seen in a world which I have thrice girdled."[37]

By many intellectual paths men have reached the vision and experience of the spiritual life, met and clasped hands, prepared to recognize Christ, when he is truly known, as the "first-born among many brethren." "When we survey the whole field of religion," wrote William James, "we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same, for Stoic, Christian and Buddhist saints are practically indistinguishable in their lives. The theories which religion generates, being thus variable, are secondary if you wish to grasp her essence you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the most constant elements."[38]

Because to be "truly saved" is to follow Christ in choosing the will of God as the law of life, finding that will revealed within as the spirit of love, Leighton well says: "We can live the Christ-life and discard the traditional dogmas. One can have the Christ-life and be a theological and metaphysical agnostic. One can have the Christ-life and swallow all the dogmas of medieval Catholicism. What matters above all else is the service of one's fellows in righteousness, integrity and love according to the mind of Christ."[39]

If, then, character and not creed be the supreme test of Christian discipleship, where can we draw a definite line of exclusion? Should we exclude the gentle and truthful Darwin, the saint of science, because he could not honestly confess a knowledge of God acceptable to the church; and include a Torquemada, who believed so fanatically that he should consign heretics to the flames?

The immensity and mechanical perfection of the universe may so overwhelm the mind as to becloud with doubt the intellectual perception of God himself. Agnos-

[37]E. Warren Clark: Katz Awa, p. 8.
[38]William James: Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 485, 527.
[39]Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Mind of Today, p. 361.

ticism and atheism are often but the expression of a revolt against low-grade, anthropomorphic ideas of God or a protest against belief that God is like the Jehovah of Israel or the God of theological tradition. The devout theist may say with Dr. Patrick, "God is the soul of the world, an indwelling spiritual presence, a creative, organizing and perfecting power, the source of our moral, religious and aesthetic ideals."[40] But He transcends all definitions. He cannot be visualized. But if God be such a Heavenly Father as Christians declare, we cannot believe that He withholds His spiritual blessings, even the highest, from any child of His merely because he is baffled in his thinking by the marvels of the universe and the mysteries of life. According to the Christian philosophy of life, if he abides in love and love abides in him, then God abides in him, though he know it not.

Though Abou ben Adhem dare not say that he loved God but only loved his fellow men, the angel showed,

> "The names whom love of God had blessed,
> And lo, Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

Men do not always lose their belief in God through moral depravity. Some of the best have not been very sure of God nor of their own immortality, while some of the worst have been very positive that God waits on them day by day and is preparing to give them a triumphal entry into heaven. Men may walk in the light with their backs to the sun and see it not. Their world may be full of shadows though their hearts are pure. It is better to be a good man with a short creed than a scoundrel with a long one.

When Helen Keller, blind and deaf, achieves a cultured womanhood in spite of her terrible disabilities, we revere the splendor of her soul. With infinite patience and resolution she triumphs over her defects and wins

[40] G. W. T. Patrick: The World and its Meaning, p. 176.

a character and scholarship far in advance of multitudes who both see and hear. And I cannot avoid something of the same reverence toward those, who without definite belief in God and without hope of future reward, take up all the duties of life with courage, find within themselves the fountains of unselfish love and spend their lives with joy in the service of their fellow men. The greatest test of the moral nature comes in the dark eclipse of faith when men learn to love the good for its own sake and not because they hope to gain a heavenly reward or escape a future punishment. No man would choose to walk in darkness, destitute of faith in the personal life and love of God. But if such darkness descends upon a human mind, for any cause, we can only think that the Divine Father would view its victim with tender compassion and rejoice to find that through it all he continues to choose and lead a blameless and loving life.

The acid test of divine judgment is applied to what a man is and not to his relation to a religious creed. This does not imply that it makes no difference what a man believes any more than it makes no difference what he eats. But some may thrive on a diet that would be fatal to others. What it does imply is that the essential thing in life is character saved from selfishness and perfected in love.

In other words, when a human life is enriched with "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, meekness, self-control," it possesses the fruits of the spirit, and "against such there is no law." The experience and not its interpretation, whether mystical or scientific, makes one a Christian. One who has it may say with Arthur Guiterman:

> "When I am dead, what I have felt so long
> My soul shall know in clearer, purer light;
> That where I loathed and hated I was wrong,
> And where I loved and pitied I was right."

CHAPTER III

PRIESTS, PROPHETS AND PHILOSOPHERS

"Everything over and above a good life, which a man thinks he can do in order to please God, is mere superstition and idolatry."

KANT.

The history of religions shows men seeking two kinds of salvation. One is escape from the punishment of sin and the other is redemption from the power of sin. One is penal, the other is moral. One cancels a penalty, the other restores a character. One engages the services of the priest, the other those of the prophet or philosopher. And men have been far more ready to trust in methods of escaping the penal consequences of sin than in methods of overcoming the enticements of sin.

No understanding of the Bible and of the religious traditions of the Church is possible until we know the history and meaning of this double quest for redemption. Naturally, the desire to escape punishment for wrong-doing appeared first and the fear of the gods prompted men's efforts to propitiate them with offerings. Upon their ability to quiet this fear priests established their authority, and to assuage it taught reliance upon their sacrifices.

To ancient Israel it was said, "Thou shalt fear Jahweh, thy God, for Jahweh, thy God, is a jealous God; lest the anger of Jahweh, thy God, be kindled against thee and he destroy thee from the face of the earth" (Deut. vi. 15). Every event was interpreted by reference to this principle of the direct control of all the forces of nature that affected Israel, for good or ill, by the powerful deity they had sworn to obey. Natural calamities were explained as due to some infraction of the national code and the consequent outbreak of divine

wrath. The people were persuaded that only in obedience to the law administered by the priesthood might they find safety. Failing in this, "Jahweh will make thy plagues wonderful . . . Cursed shalt thou be in the city and cursed shalt thou be in the field . . . until thou perish quickly by pestilence . . . the sword . . . blasting mildew . . . drought . . . hunger and thirst . . . invasion and famine . . . national ruin and utter disgrace . . . " (Deut. xxviii.). When any disaster occurred the inference was drawn that offense had been given to Jahweh and priestly intercession and costly sacrifices were the best-known means by which to obtain forgiveness and the remission of the sufferings sent by Jahweh. The threat of eternal torments was not at that time thought of; its use was deferred to a later age.

As Jahweh was regarded as the law-giver and the priests as the advocates of the people in seeking divine clemency, ritual, civil and criminal law were intimately blended with religion. The system was suited to a primitive civilization. If a man had robbed or defrauded his neighbor he must make restitution, plus twenty per cent, and "he shall bring a ram without blemish for a guilt-offering unto the priest, and the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord and he shall be forgiven"; "for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life" (Lev. vi. 17, 11). The restitution satisfied the injured party and the sacrifice was a fine payable by the offender to God, through the priest, as the executive officer of the law. It was a rude system of justice, reënforced by religious sanctions.

The sacrificial system lent itself to many interpretations and was adaptable to many uses. The priestly rites became a sort of national insurance system against their chief misfortunes as a people—"famine, pestilence and the sword"—though the immunity for which sacrificial premiums were paid was not always forthcoming and this often proved embarrassing. "The intermission

of any part of the ceremonial scheme," said Robertson Smith, "involves an accumulation of unforgiven sins, with the consequence of divine wrath on the nation and the withdrawal of God's favor."[1] "Some of the rites," writes Montefiore, "embody superstitious ideas of extremest antiquity and are strangely pagan in their form and enactment, yet out of all the heathen sting is removed by their adoption and promulgation by Jahweh."[2]

This is not the place to discuss the meanings of the various sacrifices, but the central idea present in the whole system was a conviction that through them the penalties for disobedience to the Law might be escaped and the favor of Jahweh retained. In its allegiance to this principle the Jewish system resembled that of other nations.

All priestly religions claim the authority of a divine revelation for their sacred rites. How could men know what would please the god, avert his anger, and secure his forgiveness, unless the god himself had revealed it to a chosen mediator? The Jewish priesthood was no exception to the rule. They too claimed that the laws and rites administered by them had been received by direct revelation from Jahweh. Those who still receive the ancient oracles of Israel at the valuation placed upon them by their authors take the Levitical Law as a supernatural revelation by the Eternal God to chosen Hebrews. "Thus saith Jahweh" prefaced to the statues is sufficient evidence for them of a divine revelation. Yet this faith has no real ground to support it. When we gaze at the basalt stele engraved with the text of the laws of the great Khammurabi, enacted about 2330 B.C., we see the king standing before Shamash, the Sun-god, to receive his code.[3] Of the same character was the tradition of Israel concerning the revelation of their laws from heaven. In the words of an eminent authority, "The

[1] W. Robertson Smith: The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, p. 211.
[2] C. G. Montefiore: Hibbert Lectures, 1892, p. 322.
[3] Lewis Spence: Myths and Legends of Babylonia and Assyria, p. 20.

theory of a divine institution stands or falls with the theory of a divine revelation, and this theory has even in theological schools been very generally abandoned . . Amid this mass of speculation, the most certain conclusion seems to be that sacrifice originated in childlike ideas of God, and that the fundamental motive was to gratify him by giving and sharing with him a meal."[4]

Out of this childlike idea of God grew the conviction "that the sin of the community was concentrated on the victim, and that its death was accepted as a sacrifice to divine justice."[5] Being mollified by the sacrifice, the deity would withdraw the punishment inflicted for the sin and again become gracious. Central to the priestly system became the belief that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." That is, without the sacrificial meal, shared with the god, the people would continue to suffer all manner of calamities from the offended deity who governed their destiny. Moses and Samuel depended upon the sacrifices to placate Jahweh and lead him to stay a plague or to assure a victory (Num. xvi. 41-50; I Sam. vii. 1-10). When Hezekiah "opened the doors of the house of Jahweh," incense had not been burnt nor sacrifices offered for a long period. As the people had been oppressed by their enemies during this interval, the votaries of the old rites claimed that the neglect of these rites had been the cause of the national disasters, "wherefore the wrath of Jahweh was upon Judah and Jerusalem." The king said, "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the God of Israel that his fierce anger be turned away from us." He ordered a vast offering of sacrifices and the priestly chronicler relates, "Jahweh healed the people and saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib and guarded them on every side" (II Chron. xxix., xxx., xxxi.).

[4] 'Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, Art. Sacrifice.
[5] W. Robertson Smith: Religion of the Semites, p. 401.

After David had offended Jahweh, the evidence of which was a great pestilence which slew "seventy thousand men," he purchased oxen and "offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings" for the purpose of regaining the favor of Jahweh and saving the people from his wrath. The happy result was that "Jahweh was intreated for the land and the plague was stayed" (II Sam. xxiv.) Similar ideas prevailed in other lands. The Greeks attributed plagues to the anger of "far-darting Apollo," and sought relief by sacrifices at the altar. This practice continued until abated by the discoveries of modern science regarding the cause and prevention of pestilences. The Great Plague in Europe was combatted principally with priestly intercessions and gifts to the Church. A great ecclesiastic then remarked that "pestilences are the harvests of the ministers of God."[6]

Flaubert in *Salammbo* draws a vivid picture of the effect of similar beliefs in Carthage. The people, who were suffering terribly from the siege of the barbarians, sought to learn the cause of their misfortunes. "When the Carthaginians reflected and remembered that they had neglected to send to Phoenicia the annual offering due to the Tyrian Melkarth an immense terror came over them. The gods were indignant with the Republic and would pursue her with vengeance . . . The divinities were considered in the light of cruel masters, only to be appeased with supplications and bribed with gifts . . . All were weak before Moloch, the Devourer. Human existence, even the flesh of mankind, belonged to him; therefore to preserve it the Carthaginians were wont to offer a portion of it to him, which calmed his wrath."[7] In this emergency they offered a holocaust of children, their dearest possessions, to appease the god and save the city. The proof that his anger had been turned away by this means, they said, was that after

[6]Andrew White: Warfare of Science with Theology, II, p. 67, ff.
[7]Gustave Flaubert: Salammbo, Chap. XIII.

the sacrifices had been offered relief came and they were saved.

Among the Greeks, says Hopkins, "Sacrifices to the upper gods were based on the notion that they would gladly share in the meal of their worshippers and that to offer good things to them would coerce them to do good to the worshipper in turn . . . But the victim also imparted to the worshippers who ate it communion with the god."[8]

The belief that disease, pestilence, famine, military disaster, or suffering is a penalty sent by an offended god for the neglect into which his homage has fallen, and that the penalty can be averted only by sacrificial blood, is very ancient and persistent. It arises out of ignorance of the laws which govern the forces of nature. In ancient Israel the offering of children was sanctioned. The oldest law required a man to say, "I sacrifice to Jahweh all that openeth the womb." A later law permitted him to say, "But my first-born sons I redeem." Animals were thereafter substituted on the altar and redeemed the children from the threatened death. The story of Abraham and Isaac was told to give authority to this change of ancient custom. Yet Jephthah sacrificed his daughter in fulfillment of a vow.

"Every infringement of law," says Robertson Smith, "be it merely in some point of ceremony, which we might be disposed to think indifferent, demands atonement, that the relation between God and his people may not be disturbed. To provide such atonement is the great object of the priestly ritual which culminates in the annual ceremony of the day of expiation. Atonement implies sacrifice, the blood or life of an offering presented on the altar to God. It is the blood that atones by the life that is in it . . . It is death for any but a priest to touch the altar and any undue approach of ordinary persons to the sanctuary brings wrath on Israel. Ac-

[8]E. Washburn Hopkins: The History of Religions, p. 483.

cordingly, sacrifice, atonement, forgiveness of sin are absolutely dependent on the hierarchy and its service."[9]

In the ancient world, the priestly systems, when full-grown, embraced an immense variety of functions, depending on the culture of the people and the character attributed to the gods they worshiped. But the same fundamental idea may be found in all, the desire to keep on good terms with their deity and to escape whatever form of suffering he was imposing or threatened to impose.

As Angus says, "In spite of the philosophic protest against bloody sacrifices, the prevailing view in the theology of antiquity was that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sin," so that the ancients were familiar with what has been termed "blood-theology."[10] If, therefore, we expect to find some special divine revelation to Israel, the last place to look for it would be among the members of the priestly hierarchy. They were content with the common beliefs of antiquity derived from childlike ideas of deity combined with ignorance of the true laws of nature and of life. "Men have the world over," says Barton, "misunderstood God. They have thought him hard and cruel, a being demanding blood . . . Such animal sacrifices Israel inherited from her Semitic ancestry and with conscientious reverence perpetuated. Prophets protested but ancient ideas were too strong to yield."[11]

The direct result of this principle of all priestly religions was the growth of a powerful hierarchy, which was able to use its office of bridging the gulf between the god and the people for purposes of self-aggrandizement. Intercession and propitiation by sacrifices became established as the sole means of protection against the anger of the gods. In Israel the altar, served by the Aaronic priesthood, was exalted as the only place where

[9]W. Robertson Smith: The O. T. in the Jewish Church, p. 210 ff.
[10]S. Angus: The Mystery-religions and Christianity, p. 83.
[11]George A. Barton: The Religion of Israel, p. 11.

forgiveness might be secured and the wrath of Jahweh appeased. As the people agreed that the god might punish all for the offense of one, it was to the interest of the entire tribal community to maintain a hierarchy of officials as the indispensable condition of security and prosperity. Religion and politics were thus interwoven and the hierarchy, as the consecrated guardian of the public welfare, found it impossible to keep its hands off the political affairs of the nation. With the growth of belief in a future life and the terrors of the unseen world, priestly intercessors were able to project into eternity the blessings to be derived from their sacrificial ritual. These ideas, as we shall see, afterward attained their fullest development in the Christian Church.

The actuating principle of the religion of Israel, as of the other priestly religions, was self-protection, not self-sacrifice. Whether the terror feared was pestilence, or famine, or defeat, or death, or hell, the desire to escape the danger has been uppermost. Religion, thus, has been converted into a system of barter, in which gifts were offered to a god in the lively hope of benefits in return. A pious injunction of Hesiod expresses the common sentiment: "According to thy ability offer sacrifices to the immortal gods, with thy person pure and undefiled, and burn the goodly thigh-pieces; again propitiate them with libations and sacrifices, that they may have a heart and mind kindly disposed toward thee; that thou mayest buy the land of others and not another thine." When Solomon dedicated his temple with holocausts of oxen and sheep, the burden of his prayer was for prosperity and security as a reward of fidelity in maintaining the sacrificial system (II Chron. vi., vii.).

Confidence in the real value of such systems was rudely shaken in the long course of experience. The expected benefits did not always follow. As faith declined it was revived by ascribing other than material blessings to the ancient customs. Sallustius, the friend

of Julian, in the fourth century, expresses the skepticism of many cultured Romans and also their altered faith: "And if by prayers and sacrifices we find forgiveness of sins, we do not appease or change the gods, but by what we do and by our turning to the Divine, we heal our own badness and so enjoy again the goodness of the gods. To say that God turns away the evil is like saying the sun hides himself from the blind."[12]

The whole priestly system of propitiating deity with blood was ridiculed by poets and philosophers. They denounced it as a superstition of the vulgar or as the unethical institution of a caste which derived a profit from it. Porphyry declared, "It is less impious not to respect the images of the gods than to entertain such notions of the gods as men do. The only worship of God consists in the knowledge of God and likeness to God in the inner man . . . The true temple of God is the soul of the wise man; the wise man is the true priest; God does not demand offerings and long prayers for a godly life." The Stoics returned again and again to the thought of Seneca, "Wouldst thou propitiate the gods, be thou good thyself. He has worshiped aright who has imitated them. The divine nature is not worshiped with the bodies of slain bulls but with a pious and upright will."

In India a similar movement appeared in protest against the Brahmanical sacrifices. Radhakrishnan says: "In the Uphanisads we find a return to the fresh springs of spiritual life. They declare that the soul will not obtain salvation by the performance of sacrifices. It can be obtained only by the truly religious life. Perfection is inward and spiritual, not outward and mechanical. We cannot make a man clean by washing his shirt . . . The uselessness of ritual, the futility of sacrifices as a means of salvation are brought out . . . Sacrifice is made to mean, not feasting, but renunciation. Make

[12]Sallustius: On the Gods and the World, XIV.

every action, every feeling, every thought an offering to God. Let your life be one yajna or sacrament"[13]

Buddha repudiated the sacrificial system and everything implied by it. "Ignorance only," he said, "can make these men prepare festivals and vast meetings for sacrifices. Far better to revere truth than try to appease the gods with shedding of blood. What love can a man possess who believes that the destruction of life will atone for evil deeds? Can a new wrong expiate old wrongs? Or can slaughter of an innocent victim take away the sins of mankind? This is practising religion by the neglect of moral conduct. Purify your hearts and cease to kill; that is true religion. Rituals have no efficacy; prayers are vain repetitions; and incantations have no saving power. But to abandon covetousness and lust, to become free from evil passions, and to give up hatred and ill-will, that is the right sacrifice and the true worship."[14] Words worthy of the prophets and a fit rebuke to many Christian traditions!

Great significance has been attached in the Christian religion to the sacrificial systems of the priests because the Levitical offerings have been received as a divine law to be taken as types and symbols of the Perfect Sacrifice offered on Calvary to atone for the sins of the world and to avert the penalties of sin.

Now, however, let us turn to another phase of the Hebrew religion and we shall hear a different story. In conflict with the priestly religion we find men of deep moral insight to whom the temple sacrifices appear as a delusion and a snare. They voice the aspirations of an ethical religious faith. Where they put the emphasis in their message may be found in many passages. They proclaim to Israel their conception of true religion in such words as these, "What do I care for your sacrifices, saith Jehovah, I am sated with burnt-offerings of rams

[13]S. Radhakrishnan: The Philosophy of the Uphanisads, p. 25.
[14]Paul Carus: The Gospel of Buddha, p. 26; J. Estlin Carpenter: Buddhism and Christianity, p. 92.

and fat of stall-fed beasts; the blood of your bulls and lambs and he-goats I have no pleasure in. Wash you, make you clean, take the evil of your doings out of my sight, strive for justice, punish the oppressor, do justice to the orphan, defend the cause of the widow" (Isa. i. 10-17). "I hate, I despise your feasts; yea, though ye offer me burnt-offerings I will not accept them" (Amos v.). "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice," said Hosea in the name of Jehovah. "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings? He hath showed thee O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah vi.). The priestly claim that their system was divinely ordained is denied by Jeremiah. "For I spoke not unto your fathers nor commanded them in the day I brought them out of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (Jer. vii. 22). The entire temple system, with its blood-encrusted altar excited the disgust of Isaiah and he exclaims as the spokesman of Jahweh, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit . . . He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation as he that offereth swine's blood" (Isa. lxvi.). Some of the poets take up the theme and picture Jehovah as saying, "I will take no bullock out of thy house nor he-goats out of thy fold . . . If I were hungry I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving . . . and to him that ordereth his way aright will I shew the salvation of God . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart thou wilt not despise, O God" (Ps. l., li.).

In opposing the religious system of the priests the

prophets exposed themselves to the same dangers as were met by Huss and Luther, when they opposed the Roman hierarchy. Speaking of Jeremiah's famous Temple Sermon, Buttenwieser says: "The prophet declares that only the moral law is binding and of divine authority and that to the Israelites in the wilderness God commanded no laws whatever concerning sacrifices. And this it must be remembered he declares in the face of the recently promulgated Deuteronomic law claiming divine origin for the sacrificial cult . . . To Jeremiah's contemporaries, as even to much later generations, such utterances seemed rank blasphemy and as a result the whole nation united against him. He was condemned to death and only escaped with difficulty into hiding, from which he dared not emerge for ten years."[15] The form of religion in the saddle then, as often since, would tolerate no disbelief of its claims to be divinely authorized, but the prophets did not belong to that race of preachers who prefer amiable compromises to forthright utterance of new and revolutionary truth.

"It was the false importance assigned to sacrifices," says Montefiore, "and the false estimate attributed to their effect, which provoked the prophetic indignation. In this all the prophets are at one. Sacrifices, according to them, were never specifically enjoined by Jahweh as a portion of Israel's duty to God. They were no equivalent for righteousness, just as no number of burnt-offerings would turn Jahweh from his purpose or atone for sin . . . It was the prophets, men few in number, but great in power, who gave the religion of Israel its specific character and direction."[16]

The mission of the prophets was not to predict future events, except as they could point out the imminent consequences of conduct, and they renounced the religion of animal-sacrifice in order to demand obedience to the

[15] Moses Buttenwieser: The Prophets of Israel, pp. 23, 13, 318.
[16] C. G. Montefiore: Hibbert Lectures, 1892, pp. 131, 156.

moral law as the sole condition of divine favor. "The teaching of the prophets therefore," says Marti, "deals with unrighteousness, uncharitableness, with lying and trickery in everyday life, with the social evils that afflict the people, with the delusions produced by the feasts and sacrificial system, and with insistence on the true nature of Jahweh, on his holiness and omnipotence. Through the prophets religion was elevated into the pure sphere of morals."[17]

The priests capitalized the trust of the people in the merits of sacrificial blood; the insurgent prophets denounced them for accelerating the national ruin by diverting attention from the more essential matters of moral conduct and social reform. "Therefore," saith Jahweh, "I hate your feasts. Yea, though ye offer your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings I will not accept them . . . But let justice roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream, ye that afflict the just and that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right" (Amos v.). "There is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith and killing and stealing and committing adultery; they break out and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish. And it shall be like people like priest; and I will punish them for their ways" (Hos. iv.).

The development of an ethical monotheism as the religion of Israel was due to the influence of the prophets. "Prophetism," says Thomas, "develops internally in a deeper knowledge of God and a growing sense of individual responsibility to him. Priesthood seeks to control the avenues of approach to God through rites and practices which none but the priests have the knowledge or skill or right to perform. It thus seeks to make itself essential to intercourse with God. Prophetism seeks to

[17] Karl Marti: Religion of the Old Testament, pp. 156.

know God through the internal. the personal, mystical approach and to impart the secret of that approach to all men."[18]

If any special revelation was committed to Israel or any invaluable discovery of spiritual truth made in that nation, where shall we seek for it? Among the priests or among the prophets? Between the two was an irreconcilable conflict. By their fruits may they be judged. It is the choice between Caiaphas and Christ. And the cleavage represented by these principles of religion as interpreted in the Christian Church down to the present day still divides men.

Bade takes this view of the antagonism between these two types of religion: "In Ezekiel, Leviticus and kindred priestly literature God's favor is dependent upon a strict performance of ritual. The prophets from Amos to Jeremiah denounce and repudiate this view . . . In our opinion, Gray does not put the case too strongly when he says, "It is not the institution of sacrifices but the repudiation of sacrifices that distinguishes the religion of Israel." There were clearly two religions, one of the priests, the other of the prophets . . . It follows that Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, could not have believed in the divinely revealed ritual such as Leviticus claimed to be, even if it had been in existence at that time. Holding sacrifices to be worthless, they necessarily held the sacrificial cult to be worthless . . . These uncompromising preachers of righteousness were at the same time undermining the authority of the priests and the allied false prophets to rob the people in the name of God."[19]

In the long controversy between these two religions, which the Christian Church has chosen to perpetuate, the priestly party has enjoyed many advantages. It more readily secured the support of the rich and ruling

[18] J. B. Thomas: Religion: Its Prophets and False Prophets, p. 25.
[19] W. F. Bade: The Old Testament in the Light of Today, pp. 281, 297.

class because social reform was no part of its program. Then, too, as the conservative party it was allowed to be less scrupulous in methods and more intolerant in practice, because its teaching was in harmony with the more ancient traditions and customs of the people. The gorgeous pageantry of its ritual made a more spectacular and popular appeal than anything the prophets could offer. It derived support from the superstitious fear of God and the desire to drive good bargains with Him. It offered rich rewards for conformity and threatened dire disaster for dissent. In claiming that the old ways are the safe ways and that the offering of innocent blood may cancel the guilt of many crimes, the priestly party in every age has been able to win the support of men who find ritual easier than righteousness. It could even deride the prophets for their poor success in turning the people from their evil ways and "point with pride" to the multitudes seeking absolution at its altars. "O Jerusalem that killest the prophets," was the lament of Jesus, as he faced his fate, with the priests occupying the judgment seat.

"The history of religions," Vedder truly remarks, "is the record of an age-long contest between priest and prophet, and the priest has nearly always had the better of it . . . So it was in Judaism. The prophets enjoined a new life of justice, mercy, righteousness; the priests sought to establish a cult, with machinery for obtaining on easy terms God's pardon for failure to do what the stern prophet exacted. Piety was accepted for righteousness, sacrifice for mercy, tithes for justice."[20]

It is sometimes claimed that these two forms of religion are not antagonistic but supplementary, the one charting the way of duty and the other offering a way to atone for the failures of omission and commission that follow. The two systems might be able to unite in a working partnership. This is what actually has hap-

[20] H. C. Vedder: The Fundamentals of Christianity, p. 50.

pened. The details of the manner in which priestly ritual and prophetic morality became united are befogged by distance and editorial revisions of the records. In Deuteronomy the priestly ritual of sacrifices is presented on equal terms with the moral ideals of the prophets. This compromise was apparently forced on the hierarchy, but it remained master of the situation and proceeded to entrench itself even more strongly. Adapting its system to the deepened consciousness of moral failure engendered by the prophets, it contended that the mercy of God depended more than ever upon the atoning value of its sacrifices. Obedience to the moral law was established as essential to the public welfare in the name of Moses and delivered unto the priests as the chief administrators of the laws of the tribes (Deut. xxxi. 9). Worship was centralized under their control and the people enjoined to bring to the priests their sacrifices and offerings as a means of retaining the favor of God (Deut. xii. 5-19).

"A further outcome of Deuteronomy," says Cornill, "was that a distinct and rigorously exclusive priesthood now appears as the sole lawful ministers and stewards of the cultus, and it was enacted that all its members should be descended from the tribe of Levi . . . Deuteronomy did away with oracular predictions as heathenish, and converted the priest into a sacrificer and expounder of the law . . . Accordingly the sin and atonement offerings now assume increasing dominance; the whole cultus becomes more and more an institution for the propitiation of sins, and the priest, the intermediary who negotiates forgiveness . . . Deuteronomy is an attempt to realize the prophetic ideals by external means . . . Prophecy abdicated in favor of the priesthood."[21]

The great prophets themselves, however, refused to give their sanction to any reliance at all on the priestly ritual of sacrifice. They claimed that it was worthless

[21]C. H. Cornill: The Prophets of Israel, p. 87 ff.

and merely allayed fear in a way that weakened moral resistance to evil itself. It only aided and abetted the delusion that the penalties of sin might be readily cancelled by the sacrificial atonement. Chronic moral impotence was given a religious sanction.

As Robertson Smith says: "Spiritual prophecy in the hands of Amos, Isaiah, and their successors has no alliance with the sanctuary and its ritual. It develops and enforces its own doctrines of intercourse with Jehovah and the conditions of his grace, without assigning the slightest value to priests and sacrifices . . . It is sometimes argued that such passages mean only that Jehovah will not accept the sacrifices of the wicked, and that they are consistent with a belief that sacrifice and ritual are a necessary accompaniment of true religion. But there are other texts which absolutely exclude this view. Sacrifice is not necessary to acceptable religion. Jehovah, they say, has not enjoined sacrifice. The theology of the prophets before Ezekiel has no place for sacrifice and ritual."[22]

The priestly religion dwelt in centralized isolation in the temple at Jerusalem. The rise of the synagogue among the expatriates of a dispersed Israel reduced the sacrificial religion to secondary importance and prepared the way for its final abolition. A link of attachment to the ancient system was maintained by perpetuating a traditional reverence for the Torah, but the spiritual value set upon repentance and moral obedience became greater than that set upon the temple ritual. In the destruction of the temple in the first century of our era the priestly religion of Israel received its death blow. Only the vital ethical and spiritual principles of the prophets survived thereafter.

This development of the religion of his people is thus described by a distinguished rabbi: "The great prophets of Israel alone recognized that the entire sacrificial sys-

[22]W. Robertson Smith: The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, pp. 285–288, 302.

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tem was out of harmony with the spirit of Judaism and led to all sorts of abuses, above all to a misconception of the worship of God. Reform Judaism, recognizing the results of Biblical research and the law of religious progress, adopted the prophetic view of sacrifices. Accordingly the sacrificial cult has no validity for the liberal movement and all reference to it has been eliminated from the liturgy . . . In contrast with the priestly monopoly of service with its archaic and external forms of expiation, the founders of the synagogue invested the Day of Atonement with a higher meaning in accord with the spirit of the prophets of old. Atonement could no longer be obtained by the priest with sacrificial blood, the incense, and the scape-goat; it must come through repentance of the sinner, leading him back from the path of error to the way of God. No mediator is needed between man and his heavenly Father from the moment each individual soul learned to approach God in true humility on the Day of Atonement, imploring pardon for his sins and promising to amend his ways."[23]

Abraham Lincoln once said, "When a man is sincerely penitent for his misdeeds, and gives satisfactory evidence of the same, he can safely be pardoned, and there is no exception to the rule."[24] That has been the conviction of the prophets of the nations, but all priesthoods deny it. They seek to confirm the dread of God, by claiming that there is no forgiveness for those who repent and reform their lives. That forgiveness can only be gained through mediatorial priests by obedience to the ritual law.

In spite of the fact that the Old Testament was compiled by men who were biased in favor of the priesthood and its ritual, this long conflict between the ethical religion of the prophets and the sacrificial religion of the priests could not be eliminated. Modern scholarship

[23]K. Kohler: Jewish Theology, pp. 264, 268, 467.
[24]Letters and Speeches of Lincoln, Everyman's Library, p. 234.

finds that the development of religion in Judaism led to the repudiation of the sacrificial religion of Israel and the other nations, and not to its canonization as a divine law.

There would seem to be little difficulty in deciding to which of these two parties Jesus adhered. He was a son of the synagogue and not a votary of the temple. Everywhere he was hailed as a prophet; no one ever thought of him as a priest. His favorite text was, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." When he visited the temple it was to drive out those who trafficked in sacrifices. Without any expressed regret he foresaw the destruction of the temple-religion. When he taught his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of sins it was not on the ground of any sacrifice offered to propitiate God, but simply because God is a Father, who forgives the truly pentient. "Forgive us as we forgive others," was the substance of his prayer. When one said, "To love God with all the heart and one's neighbor as himself is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices," he replied, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." When the priests assailed him they feared the people "because they took him for a prophet." The Sermon on the Mount and his great parables summarize his teaching but they contain no allusion to the ancient principle of the priests that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." He said, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you." It seemed to him unbelievable that God should not be as merciful as men. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son he made his meaning clear; God is a Father who welcomes the sincerely penitent and the only death he sanctions is that of a kid to make a feast to celebrate his boy's return.

"The priestly religion," writes Lyman Abbott, "centered around and was expressed by an elaborate sacrificial system whose temple ran red with the blood of

slaughtered cattle. This priestly conception Jesus Christ never approved by word or act . . . His suffering love Christ never interpreted as man's offering to God; but always as God's offering to man."[25] "How miserably all those finely constructed theories of sacrifice and vicarious atonement," concludes Wernle, "crumble to pieces before this faith in the love of God our Father, who so gladly pardons. The one parable of the prodigal son wipes them all off the slate. Sin and its burden lie far away from the disciples of Jesus, and still further is the theology of sin and propitiation."[26]

Jesus took his stand with the prophets and from the hierarchy received the prophet's reward. Unlike Jeremiah, he did not hide from the wrath that broke upon him, but faced the charge of blasphemy and bore the penalty. "The teaching of Jesus," says Beyschlag, "goes further along this track. The Father's heart is not narrower, but still wider than in the Old Testament; he teaches that God not only forgives the man who turns to Him, without more ado, but that He wishes to convert even the unconverted in order to forgive them—that He seeks the lost until He finds it. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the penitent invokes the grace of God, and without any reservation or reference to a future sacrifice, it is said "he went down to his house justified." In the Parable of the Unfaithful Steward the relation of God to the sinner is compared with the position of a king to whom one of his servants owed ten thousand talents; the servant prays for mercy and his lord sets him free, and remits the debt, without any mention of a vicarious payment. The Prodigal Son trusts to the unbroken love and goodness of his father, and finds it without any innocent brother having to make amends for the guilty. Jesus never taught otherwise when speaking of the divine mercy and forgiveness of

[25]Lyman Abbott: What Christianity Means to Me, p. 162.
[26]Paul Wernle: Beginnings of Christianity, I, p. 109.

sin. He never represented the Father's heart as being inwardly hindered in freely forgiving."[27]

In these principles of Jesus and the prophets may be found the gospel of Progressive Christianity. To those who believe in them they constitute a charter of reconciliation, peace, and salvation.

By the earliest Christian writers the death of Christ is explained not as a fulfillment of the sacrificial religion of priestly propitiation by blood, but is said to be due to the influence of Satan on Judas and to the implacable enmity of a priesthood, who are indicted by them as the "murderers" of the Messiah. This is scarcely consistent with the idea that Christ came into the world to offer his life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice adumbrated in the Levitical ritual. He prayed for a possible way of escape with honor, and when none was found, he submitted with manly resignation and mingled his blood with the blood of the prophets. He was rejected and despised by a people infatuated by the glamor of the temple. His rejection was a temporary defeat of the divine purpose, not its fulfillment.

Jesus is reported, in two passages, to have said that he gave his life "a ransom for many" and that his blood was shed for "the remission of sins." Their presence betrays an early attempt by the writers of the gospels to interpret the meaning of Messiah's death in terms of their traditional theology. "Man," says Cone, "is represented in the teaching of Jesus as in immediate relations with the Father. The latter needs no propitiation, and for the former no sacrifice is required but that of his selfish passions. The man who would save his life must lose it. No other life is offered up as a substitute for his . . . In Golgotha there is no substitution. Each soul must pass through it following the great Leader. This is the teaching fitted to produce the heroic character of which Jesus himself was the noblest type, and capable

[27] W. Beyschlag: New Testament Theology, I, p. 100.

of nurturing a church which through conflict and martyrdom should conquer the world. It was quite in accordance with all his teaching that Jesus gave up his life as the supreme act of renunciation for the sake of fidelity to himself and his cause; and the power of his death, of his cross, is manifested, not in those who fain would grasp a crown on the "merits" of his sacrifice, but in the heroes, who, nurtured in his spirit, have dared and died for conscience and for truth . . . The saying then in which Jesus is made to speak of his life as a ransom must either be an addition to the discourse in which it occurs, reflecting the ideas of a later time, or it does not give in the Greek rendering an accurate reproduction of his words . . . The incompatibility of the idea of sacrificial atonement with the general scope and intention of the teaching of Jesus respecting the relation of man to God is so manifest that these words cannot but be regarded with suspicion."[28]

In any fairly complete survey, therefore, of the development of religion both in Israel and in the church, we cannot escape the conclusion of Rauschenbusch: "The religion of the priest and the religion of the prophet grew side by side on the same national soil and from the same historic convictions, but they are two distinct and antagonistic religions. The usual distinctions between separate religious denominations are trivial compared with this. The difference cuts across most other lines of cleavage . . . This antagonism is a permanent element in the Christian religion, and part of the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. A comprehension of the difference between priest and prophet is essential to a clear understanding of Jesus and to intelligent discipleship."[29]

As we shall see in the next chapter, religion as taught by Christ, the ripened fruit of the prophetic ideals in

[28]Orello Cone: The Gospel and its Earliest Interpretations, p. 113. See N. Schmidt: The Prophet of Nazareth, p. 282.
[29]W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 276, 274.

Israel, was speedily converted into a new priestly religion, against which many Christians ever since have protested. Loyalty to Christ is forcing increasing numbers to say with Glover, what Liberal Christians have long declared: "In dealing with the Christian religion, its ideas and the expression of them, the first thing to learn is the mind of Jesus himself. It would be significant if he, with his genius for religion, his insight and intuition in all that bears on God, went back from the stage of the synagogue to that of the temple. But he does not. He too omits sacrifice. His teaching centers in another conception of God . . . All ancient ritual, all priestly theory of sacrifice and offering, is more than ever obsolete when we hear the voice of Jesus . . . In the atmosphere of such thoughts there is no place for the blood of bulls or goats; symbol or no symbol, and historically Jesus has abolished sacrifice and banished the ideas that underlie it."[30]

Edwin Lewis reasons it out in this way: "If God is such as Christ is, then God stands just as ready to forgive as Christ did . . . That is to say, if Jesus forgave the penitent sinner or declared him to be forgiven, for no other reason than because of repentance, on what ground do we hold that God required something more? Jesus' attitude toward all the various devices for securing divine favor and forgiveness of sin was precisely the attitude of the Hebrew prophets . . . Repentance and faith, rectification and love, consecration and service, these are the sacrifices asked of men. On them alone he conditioned the possibility of the wayward child being forgiven and restored to his rightful estate."[31]

If this position be accepted as the true one, can the conclusion be avoided that nine-tenths of the traditional theology has been a huge blunder? The whole conception of a Divine Being incarnating Himself in human

[30]T. R. Glover: Jesus in the Experience of Men, p. 63.
[31]Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 177 ff.

flesh to offer the perfect atoning sacrifice of blood for the remission of sins becomes as obsolete as the Levitical Law. To the exposure of this error and to a better understanding of the course of religious evolution in Israel, culminating in the teaching of Christ, Martineau consecrated his great genius. On this subject he says, "Now to the fundamental assertion of the vicarious system that Deity cannot without inconsistency and imperfection pardon on simple repentance, the whole Bible is one protracted and unequivocal contradiction . . . There is no reason, then, why anything should be supplied in our thoughts to alter the plain meaning of the announcement of the prophets and holy men of God's unconditional forgiveness on repentance."[32]

[32]James Martineau: Studies in Christianity, pp. 102, 104.

CHAPTER IV

ATONEMENT AND SACRIFICE

"Salvation's Giver, Christ the only Son
Hath by his cross and blood the victory won.
Offered was he for the greatest and the least,
Himself the victim and himself the priest.
The victims offered by the law of old
In types celestial mysteries foretold."

OLD HYMN.

One of the best roads to emancipation from certain elements in traditional Christianity is to see how the spiritual idealism of Christ became subordinated to a new priestly religion of salvation by sacrificial blood. Even while maintaining the prophetic standards of moral life, the Christian Church soon became involved in endless controversies over the need of an atoning sacrifice to cancel the penalties of human sin. The Church finally yielded to the old pagan and Jewish belief that the grace of God that brings to men the gifts of repentance, pardon, love and peace, is denied to all who are not sheltered from divine wrath by faith in the merits of atoning blood. This surrender led to many tragic consequences. The principles for which Christ and the prophets had suffered were obscured by a revival of the sway of ideas which they had repudiated. A very brief outline of what occurred is all that may here be attempted.

The faith of the first Christian community naturally expressed itself in Jewish terms. God was worshiped as the Eternal Father and, in the words of Peter, "Jesus was a man approved of God, whom He hath made both Lord and Messiah, being anointed with the holy spirit and with power, for God was with him. This Messiah had been wickedly killed, but God had rescued him from

death and would quickly send him back to complete the restoration of all things" (Acts ii. 26-36; x. 38).

How might men be prepared to become citizens of Christ's coming kingdom on the earth? The answer of that first Christian society in Jerusalem was simple. They must believe in Jesus as the Messiah and obey him as Lord. They must abandon sin with true penitence, forgive all who had injured them, receive the divine forgiveness as taught by Jesus and love one another. They must have the spirit of good will toward all men.

The famous "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," which was esteemed by many churches of a later time as "holy scripture," opens with these words, "There are two ways, one of life and one of death . . Now the way of life is this; first, thou shalt love God who made thee; second, thy neighbor as thyself, and whatsoever thou wouldst not have befall thee do not thou to another." These words are followed by a paraphrase of the Sermon on the Mount. Such was the Way of Life. It was to follow Christ in conduct. The Lord's Supper was not celebrated as a memorial of an atoning sacrifice but as a service of thanksgiving. Partaking of the bread and wine in fraternal communion, the disciples should say, "We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou hast made known to us through Jesus, thy Servant . . and for the knowledge, and faith and immortality which thou hast made known to us through Jesus, thy servant." To be a Christian was to choose Christ as the Lord and Master, to follow his way of life and to wait patiently for his coming to set up his kingdom. Whether we read Paul or Barnabas or Clement or the Shepherd of Hermas, we find that the marks of a true disciple of Christ must be found in hearts cleansed from impure, selfish, and unkind thoughts, and made perfect in love and goodness.

In the beginning the Christian Church was composed of converts from the Jewish and pagan religions. As we

have already seen, they had been brought up in the belief that God or the gods were placated and made gracious toward men by sacrifices of blood. The time soon came when this traditional belief demanded recognition. The leaven of the old priestly religion thus was introduced into the Church. It led to the closing of the Way of Life into which Christ had invited the penitent to enter with confidence in God's mercy to all except those who approached it with faith in a sacrifice offered to atone for their sins. This transformation of the gospel of Christ is commonly ascribed to Paul, the converted Pharisee.

Glancing at Paul's explanation of the death of Messiah, we should not be surprised to find his arguments colored by the theological school in which he had been educated. He addressed people who had been trained to do their religious thinking in the same terms. As Pfleiderer says: "Paul took as his starting point for his theory of redemption, not the consciousness of Jesus, but the Pharisaic legal religion, according to which God does not forgive unless payment of the debt is made, any more than an earthly judge, but the payment may be made by a vicarious sacrifice or penance on the part of an innocent person . . . But the fact that this unethical conception, which is as contrary to the spirit of the Hebrew prophets as it is to that of Greek philosophy, had an equal vogue among both Jews and pagans, points, without doubt, to the soul-sickness of mankind at the time."[1]

"The belief in propitiation by means of blood," writes Bacon, "dominated the whole Jewish and Gentile world . . . In the Jewish and Gentile world men continued to believe in a personal God who is moved by the intercession of those who have died for His sake . . . The message Paul took was not that of the Prophet of

[1]Otto Pfleiderer: Primitive Christianity, I, pp. 335, 74.

Nazareth . . . . It was the common and general gospel."[2]

Paul's arguments are those of a man of genius, supremely devoted to the spiritual ideals of Christ. They were adapted to the situation confronting him, and by displacing many of the old traditions and superstitions, by erasing national and religious boundaries, they made him the pioneer of universal and spiritual Christianity in all nations. In laboring to bring men into his experience of Christlike living he sought to break down the intellectual opposition of his hearers to his doctrine that Jesus was the Heavenly Messiah, whom God had sent to be the Lord of men. Through all his arguments to meet objections, the end he kept steadily in view was that men should be renewed in the spirit of their lives, and having faith in Christ should, like him, let the spirit of God reign in their hearts to produce holiness and love. He tried to make his gospel an instrument fitted to the times to bring men into obedience to Christ. Though some of his premises may now appear to us faulty and some of his conclusions weak, we must bow with reverence before the social passion and spiritual fervor of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

Stated in his own words, his method was thus described, "And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; and to them without the Law, as without the Law, that I might gain them without the Law; I am become all things to all men that I may by all means save some." This can only mean that he used a line of argument with the Jews calculated to overcome their objections and to the Gentiles he spoke as a Jew who had abandoned Judaism. Adapting each discourse to the specific intellectual preconceptions of his hearers he sought the end he had in view, which was to lead men into Christ's Way of Life. This method must be followed by all effective preachers in any age. The

[2]B. W. Bacon: Jesus and Paul, pp. 48, 59.

purpose Paul had in view remains the unchangeable goal of all Christian effort, but the means to gain that end must vary with the growing knowledge and changing social conditions of the world. Today Paul would say, "and to the scientist I became a scientist that I may win the scientific world to the service of Christ."

Meeting the Jews, Paul came to grips with their peculiar philosophy of history. As a basis of profitable discussion he accepted it as true up to the appearing of Jesus as Messiah. He accepted their belief that God had created man perfect and holy in Eden and that Adam, the first man, had fallen into sin and brought on all men the divine condemnation to death. God had chosen Israel and given them the Law for instruction and discipline. But, he tells them, it was not a permanent system nor intended for all nations, as they had believed. Not by the works of the Law may men inherit life and immortality. Its authority ceased when God sent the Heavenly Messiah to inaugurate a new era. Now men must obey him and not Moses.

Why had Messiah died in apparent defeat instead of living to rule the world? He died, said Paul, because only by suffering death could he conquer death and rise victorious over death, the penalty of sin. In voluntarily suffering the fate which Adam had brought on all men, he made a supreme sacrifice, humbling himself to the death of the cross, on account of which God would cancel the death penalty in the future for all who would follow him and with him become the heirs of eternal life. The same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead would raise his followers also as children of God from the death of sin and the darkness of the grave. As Cone says, "The object of the death of Christ, as Paul conceived it, was to counteract the effect of Adam's sin and thus restore the normal relations between God and man."[6] Spiritual life here and eternal life hereafter were

[6]Orello Cone: Paul, p. 256.

the gifts of God to those having faith in Christ, the Lord of Life, who died to bring life and immortality to light. The first Adam and the second Adam represent two great beginnings in human history; one failed and brought in sin and death, the other did not fail and brought in love and life. It was in the hope of overcoming sin and its death-penalty that the Jews observed the ordinances of their Law. They expected that through obedience to these they would establish the Reign of God and attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead. It was touching a sore spot, but Paul reminded them that their trust in ever being able to live up to the requirements of their Law was illusory. All they lacked, however, would be received as the gift of God by those who would believe in and obey Jesus as Lord and Messiah. His death had accomplished all that they hoped to gain from even perfect obedience to their moral and ceremonial Law, and they should center their former faith in it now in Christ, and receive as a free gift of God the spiritual and immortal life and citizenship in the Kingdom of God on earth for which they yearned. God's most signal exhibition of mercy to men is revealed in substituting faith in Christ for faith in the works of the Law, and faith in sacrifices as the way of salvation.

Himself convinced that Jesus was that Heavenly Messiah by whom God would judge and rule the world, Paul was fully persuaded that there was no other way by which men might escape from the power of sin and death, except by submission to this Messiah. To believe in him meant a pledge to obey him and to obey him meant to become like him, a son of God, partaking of the divine nature. The power of God was present in the world as a holy spirit to assist in accomplishing this great change in all who believe in Jesus as the Messiah or Christ of God and become his servants. All neglecting this means of salvation must inherit the original doom of Adam's race and abide under the curse. To Paul there

was "one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah," and this Messiah had been revealed as the Lord of the world and was to be obeyed. Those who had trusted in the sacrificial system for deliverance from the penalties of sin might find in Christ all the blessings they hoped to gain by their former offerings, and more. Through his sacrifice of himself in a mortal death, to which he was not an heir and from which God had delivered him, the willingness of God to cancel the death penalty for sin and make his followers heirs of life with him was revealed to the world. "Through one man sin entered the world and death by sin. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We find Paul giving this witness in the synagogue of Corinth, "testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah" (Acts xviii. 2-5). When they refused to believe it, he told them that their blood would be upon their own heads, saying, "Henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." The change of audience led to new interpretations of his message. As a son of dispersed Israel Paul was familiar with the great mystery-religions of the empire and their sacrifices, their initiations, their devotion to savior-gods through whom they sought rebirth and immortal life. "Every mystery-religion, being a religion of redemption, offered means of suppressing the old man and of imparting or vitalizing the spiritual principle. Every serious mystic approached the solemn sacrament of Initiation believing that he thereby became "twice-born" and passed in a real sense from death unto life by being brought into a mysterious intimacy with the deity."[4] But as Pfleiderer says: "Their expiatory rites, moreover, since they were divorced from an ethical ideal seemed rather to blunt, than to intensify and deepen, moral feeling. What neither the Stoic teachers nor the priests of the mystery-cults were able

[4]S. Angus: The Mystery-Religions and Christianity, p. 95.

to effect Paul accomplished by means of the gospel of the historical Saviour Jesus Christ. This was a saviour who could take the place both of the saving gods of the mysteries and of the ideals of virtue of the Stoics. . "[5] That which the Gentiles sought blindly in vain, by means of their religious rites, Paul declared might be found by faith in Jesus as the Heavenly Messiah, through whom God would grant spiritual life and immortality to men. "For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

As a devout Pharisee Paul had been proud of his inheritance in Israel, whom, he believed, God had chosen to receive the revelation of his Law. "Happy are Israel," said Rabbi Akiba, "in that they are called children of the All-Present; but it was by a special love to them that it was made known to them that they were called children of the All-Present." "That is to say," says Herford, "the relation of children to Father was only effectively realised by those who belonged to the community of Israel. All others were indeed potentially His children, but could have no knowledge of their true relation to Him except through the revelation made to Israel. That revelation had been offered to all nations, but only Israel had accepted it."[6]

To Paul therefore the Law of Israel had appeared as a divine institution embodying a covenant which God had entered into and sealed with an oath that in Israel should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Israel should be not merely one more earthly kingdom but a kingdom of God ruled from heaven with its laws expressing the divine will. God could not violate his part in such a covenant and in fulfillment of it had sent the Messiah from heaven to inaugurate and establish that kingdom and lead the people into obedience to the divine will. But through blindness and unbelief Israel had

[5]Otto Pfleiderer: Primitive Christianity, I, p. 61.
[6]R. Travers Herford: The Pharisees, p. 158.

rejected the Messiah and crucified him. Hence they had forfeited their right to the fulfillment of the contract. That rejection ended the covenant obligation of God to make Israel the sole custodian of the kingdom. This fatal error of his people Paul interpreted as meaning that the benefits of that kingdom might now be extended to all nations. "By their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. xi. 11).

His own experience had taught Paul the impotence of the Law as a means of establishing a kingdom of God on earth. No power went with it to produce obedience but only condemnation. A new method had now been introduced through which the nature of men should be inwardly transformed into likeness to Christ, and thereby enabling them to do the will of God and experience His reign in their hearts. In rejecting the Messiah his own people had broken and thus cancelled the old covenant that had given birth to the law. A new covenant was now in force by which power to live the spiritual life required of men in God's kingdom would be bestowed upon all who would receive him as Lord and Messiah. This abrogation had been legally made in his death. But how?

Arguing as a legalist, Paul found proof of his contention in the death of Jesus on the cross. That act was an act of excommunication from Israel. When he was raised from the dead by the power of God, he could no longer, since his status as a Jew was gone, remain a Jewish Messiah but was free to become a World Messiah prepared to welcome into the kingdom men of all nations who would follow him. The works of the Law were no longer to be required of them as a qualification. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law . . For it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree" (Gal. iii. 10-14). "Paul could not help seeing," says Everett, "that, although accursed before the Law, Jesus was accepted and glorified by God . . If Jesus were thus raised and glorified, He must be the Christ of

God. If he were the Christ (Messiah) the fact that before the Law he was accursed meant that for the Christian the reign of the Law was over."[7] No more circumcision. Sacrifices were ended. No more rules and ceremonies such as the Jews believed to be essential. No more exclusiveness. Henceforth, the subjects of the Messiah should be, not the seed of Abraham, but a new Israel of the spirit, composed of all who would believe in and obey him. The blessings of the kingdom of God had overflowed the boundaries of Israel and reached out to all nations. Cast out of Israel by the Law, the Law by that act had cast itself out of existence. The cross, therefore, had given the death-blow to the old covenant and legally annulled all its provisions as a means of establishing right relations between God and men. "Through the abolition of the law the middle wall of partition was broken down and the enmity between Jew and Gentile was done away . . . through this abolition of the law, Gentiles had become fellow-citizens of the household of God."[8] Because his death on the cross deprived him of his status as a Jew according to Jewish law, the gifts of God, formerly confined within Israel, were now offered to the Gentiles.

To the Greeks of Ephesus, therefore, Paul was able to write: "Wherefore, remember that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision; that ye at that time were separated from Messiah, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that were afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so

[7] C. C. Everett: The Gospel of Paul, p. 211.
[8] Op. cit., p. 167.

making peace . . . So ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints."

Not having the intellectual prepossessions of Paul and of his audience we miss some of the force of his arguments. Yet their cogency is admitted by all familiar with the thought of his times. Their effectiveness is proven by the number of churches he founded in his faith. By them he was able to induce men to forsake their evil ways and to cultivate the Christlike virtues that they might be worthy of a place in the kingdom of Messiah. Yet his doctrine does not meet the intellectual problems of men today as it did in his day. His first assumption of the Fall of Adam and the resulting doom of death for his posterity is contradicted by the facts of human history. His expectation of the speedy return of the Messiah when "we that are alive shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" has been shown to be an illusion. His doctrine that the air is infested with a hierarchy of demons no longer satisfies. So with many of his other opinions, his system of theology, though adapted to his time, lacks the elements of finality.

The successors of Paul continued to do as he did, that is, they adapted their doctrinal interpretations of Christ and his mission to the thought of their own time. The old Jewish cult of animal sacrifice, which was indigenous to all parts of the Greco-Roman world, was rehabiliated and given new meanings. The harshest features of the old sacrificial theology reappeared in new form and often the words of Paul could be quoted to give them support. Among the many meanings attached by the people to their sacrificial offerings one came into special prominence, the belief that God or the gods could be propitiated by a costly sacrifice and thus induced to pardon an offender and annul the penalty due to his sin. The life of the victim was accepted as a substitute for the life, and as an atonement for the guilt,

of the worshiper. This traditional faith both Jews and Gentiles brought with them into the church when they became disciples of Jesus. Though they abandoned the old methods of worship they retained the old belief in principle and credited the death of Christ with the power to reconcile men with God that they had formerly attributed to the old sacrifices. "On the whole it is apparent," says Smith, "that the various aspects in which atoning rites presented themselves to ancient worshipers have supplied a variety of religious images which passed into Christianity, and still have currency. Redemption, substitution, purification, atoning blood, the garment of righteousness, are all terms which in some sense go back to antique ritual. But in ancient religion all these terms are very vaguely defined . . . and the attempt to find in them anything as precise and definite as the notions attached to the same words by Christian theologians is altogether illegitimate."[9]

When the Mediterranean peoples succeeded in obtaining full control of the church the religion taught by the Galilean in his parables was buried under these popular doctrines associated with the old religions. A new priestly religion was born which insisted that Jesus should be adored as both Sacrifice and Priest. With this ancient principle as a basis of organization, a new priesthood was instituted which in the course of time assumed the sacerdotal functions of the old priesthoods in the name of Christ.

As Foster says: "A Catholicizing deterioration of religion began with the apologetics for the death of Christ, when the offering idea was introduced. The Messiah's crucifixion was regarded as the Christian's propitiatory offering to God. A deterioration of Jesus' religion began in this matter, no matter who did it. The race seems to fail to rise to Jesus' attitude. In the morality of the inner life and his religion of a moral God, it looks as if

[9]W. Robertson Smith: The Religion of the Semites, p. 418.

the race would never get up to Jesus, rather than it should get ahead of him and he fail to be final."[10]

Thus the Church reverted to the old established belief, which Christ and the prophets had repudiated, that God would not forgive sin until a sufficient sacrificial atonement had been offered to him and added as a codicil of its own that this atonement was provided in the death of Christ. Taking the priestly system of ancient Judaism as a divine revelation of the essential principles of true religion, many of the Fathers of the Church interpreted its sacrifices as types and symbols of Calvary. This style of interpretation fell on fertile soil and found ready acceptance among peoples already accustomed to reliance on sacrifices. As Herford says, "The sacrificial and sacerdotal elements in Christianity were no doubt developed from the use made of the Old Testament by the church; but they would not have been developed at all, unless they had satisfied Gentile needs, and harmonized with previous Gentile usage."[11]

This new application of old principles served a good purpose at the time. It supplied a bridge which enabled both Jews and Pagans to cross over from their allegiance to the old altars to the new, without a sense of utter and complete change. Their line of reasoning may be learned from such words as these: "All mankind had formerly incurred the sentence of the law and were criminals; but the Word of God took upon Himself the punishment to be inflicted, and thus justice was satisfied; and, by undergoing punishment in our nature, He applied to our persons the redemption wrought by it."[12] Augustine characterized Christ as "the great High Priest, who offered himself to God in his passion for us" and "was able to expiate sins by dying." Eusebius said, "That as a victim of God and a great sacrifice, He might be offered to the Most High for the whole world." "The

[10]George B. Foster: Christianity in its Modern Expression, p. 88.
[11]R. Travers Herford: The Pharisees, p. 229.
[12]Athanasius: First Oration against the Arians.

blood of Christ," said Ambrose, "is the price paid for all, by which the Lord Jesus, who alone has reconciled the Father, has redeemed us."

By these compromises with the popular theology of antiquity the Church won hosts of recruits, but when this new system attained its full development, as Edmond Holmes says: "Everything that Christ valued most, with the exception of such sentiments and rules of life as devotion to his person forced on the conscience of Christendom, had either been ignored or proscribed. Everything that Christ hated most had been accepted, systematized and authoritatively taught. All the ideas of the Old Testament, the ideas that had led men to Pharisaism, had been formally adopted. The central idea of Israel's creed, that of salvation by machinery, had won complete and apparently final triumph over the central idea of Christ's creed, that of salvation by spiritual growth . . . The audacious claim of Israel to be God's chosen people had been outmatched and even outrivaled by the claim of the Church to have inherited a complete monopoly of the grace and favor of God . . . Except so far as the personal influence of Christ—the Christ of Gospel story—liberated men from and lifted them above the formal conceptions of their creed, the relapse into Judaism was complete."[13]

Dr. Henry puts it, "There ought to be nothing plainer to the Bible student than the radical opposition of the Gospel of Jesus to the religious system of the Jews . . . It follows that in so far as the Christian religion was a perpetuation of Judaism it failed to be a development of the religion of Jesus."[14]

"It was," says Fairbairn, "the hands of Cyprian that studiously clothed the new clergy with all the dignities of the old priesthood, and provided it with appropriate sacrificial functions and intercessory duties . . . What

[13]Edmond Holmes: The Creed of Christ, p. 171.
[14]Francis A. Henry: Jesus Christ and the Christian Religion, p. 149.

Cyprian shows is a rejuvenescent Judaism, the kingdom of truth translated into a kingdom of priests."[15] The thanksgiving service of the Lord's Supper was transformed into a sacramental sacrifice, for the remission of the penalties due to sin, for the cancellation of guilt, for the moderation and shortening of the purgatorial sufferings of the dead, and also for the alleviation of earthly calamities and sufferings, in so far as these were viewed as punishments for sin.[16]

"The teachings of Jesus," says Ladd, "required his followers to break with the practices and conceptions of the "Priestly Code" with regard to the nature and value of sacrifices. In themselves considered, sacrifices do not really effect any of the functions which ancient Judaism, in common with so large a proportion of the religions of the world, had been accustomed to attribute to them. They do not propitiate God."[17] The Church admitted that their day was done, but gave them a new role to play as historic symbols of the perfect sacrifice of the Messiah. Thus instead of really abandoning them and the ideas which prompted them, the Church gave them a new lease of life. As an eminent divine truthfully says, "The religion of the uneducated masses is the superstition of our heathen ancestry, re-baptized with Christian names."[18]

"The sacrifices of the Jewish nation," say Roman Catholic authorities, "more particularly that of the paschal lamb and the victim of expiation, were typical of the great sacrifice that the Redeemer was to offer on Calvary . . . Nor were the sacrifices of the heathen anything more or less than a seeking after the true sacrifice of the atonement." Christ was "a victim of infinite value needed to reconcile God with man."[19]

[15]A. M. Fairbairn: The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, pp. 102, 104.
[16]Prof. J. H. Kurtz: Church History, I, p. 369.
[17]George T. Ladd: Philosophy of Religion, I, p. 529.
[18]R. Heber Newton: Catholicity, p. 124.
[19]Francis Spirago: The Catechism Explained, pp. 528, 529.

The Mass became the central ceremonial of the Church. The bread and wine were said to be miraculously changed into the body and blood of Christ by his mystical presence in the elements. These were offered upon the altar to secure the forgiveness of those who trust its merits. "The sacrifice of the Mass," it is said, "is a living renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, for in the Mass, as upon the cross, Christ immolates himself . . . Through the sacrifice of the Mass sinners obtain the gift and grace of penitence, while the just obtain the remission of venial sin and of the temporal punishment due to sin . . . All who are present at Mass are spiritually sprinkled with the blood of Christ . . . Every priest offers the sacrifice of the Mass for the salvation of the whole world; without it destruction would long ago have come upon the earth by reason of the multitude of man's transgressions . . . As the holy sacrifice of the Mass is an oblation of infinite value, to celebrate or hear Mass is a good work which surpasses all other good works in excellence . . . Every Catholic is bound under pain of mortal sin, to hear the whole of one Mass devoutly every Sunday and holyday of obligation."[20]

No Jewish or pagan priesthood ever made such extravagant claims for their sacrificial rites as is done by the Christian priesthood. "The sacrifice of the Mass," says Cardinal Gibbons, "is identical with that of the cross, both having the same victim and High Priest—Jesus Christ. The only difference consists in the manner of the oblation. Christ was offered up on the cross in a bloody manner, and in the Mass he is offered up in an unbloody manner. On the cross he purchased our ransom, and in the Eucharistic sacrifice the price of that ransom is applied to our souls . . . To form an adequate idea of the divine sacrifice of the Mass, we must bear in mind the victim offered—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. If all human beings in the world,

[20]Op. cit. pp. 541–544, 546, 550, 556.

and all living creatures and all inanimate objects, were collected and burned as a holocaust unto the Lord, they would not confer as much praise on the Almighty as a single Eucharistic sacrifice."[21] "In the Holy Eucharist," says Di Bruno, "the victim, namely, Jesus Christ, is truly present, therefore He can be offered up, as an oblation to His Eternal Father; and though the death of the victim does not take place in reality, yet it does take place mystically."[22]

All through such statements we hear echoes of the ancient priesthoods offering human sacrifices on their altars to appease the wrath of their gods. The details are changed but the principles are the same. The ministrant assumes mediatorial functions and claims authority to absolve from sin those who trust in its merits. Those excluded from the benefits of the sacrifice are abandoned to indescribable torments in the world to come. "According to the true Catholic doctrine," says Sasse, "the power of remitting and retaining sins is a true power, though ministerial, by itself and immediately affecting the remission of sins, and its act or the absolution pronounced by the priest is the immediate cause of the remission."[23]

The Protestant Reformers rejected the Mass, the saving efficacy of the sacraments and the need of priestly absolution, but while doing this still retained the central principle of the priestly religion, namely, that forgiveness of sin is conditioned upon trust in the merits of sacrificial blood. This doctrine still remains the central theme of conservative Protestant preaching. The sacrifice of the Mass has been discontinued but men are told that they must continue to believe in a celestial High Priest who sprinkles the mercy-seat with his own blood to propitiate Deity and obtain the remission of the

[21]Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, p. 355 ff.
[22]Joseph Faa Di Bruno: Catholic Belief, pp. 78–79.
[23]H. C. Sheldon: Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century, p. 259.

penalties due to the guilt of the believer. In other words, Protestantism did not make a clean sweep in its repudiation of the priestly conception of salvation and return to the ethical faith of Jesus and the prophets but only repudiated the services of the hierarchy.

All the creeds bear witness to the extent with which conservative Protestantism retains this priestly way of salvation in principle. It is said, for example, "One Christ, Very God and Very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile the Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men . . . He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by the sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world." And these Articles of Religion are prefaced with the words, "No man shall put his own sense or comment to the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense."[24] In creeds and hymns without number this faith is propagated as the theme of the gospel and the plan of salvation.

Probably the majority of those accustomed to the phraseology of evangelical piety have but a hazy notion of what it all means. They sing about "a fountain filled with blood" and about losing their sins "at the cross" without thinking what the well worn words signify. These ideas are simply part of their religious heritage, as were the traditions of Israel with the enemies of Christ and Paul and which they repeat and defend with the same loyal zeal. They are not supposed to be thought about critically but to be received with thankfulness. When they say that Jesus was put to death upon the cross "for our redemption, who made there a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," what do they mean? Let us try to understand them better.

[24]Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

The words of an eminent Methodist theologian of the last generation may be quoted to show just what this language means to the Fundamentalists of our time: "The burnt-offering was the earliest, most common and most comprehensive of the oblations dedicated to heaven. Its pre-eminence was its symbolical meaning, that combined in one the expiatory shedding of blood and the perfect offering of self . . . It was this which Noah presented at the second beginning of propitiatory oblations . . . Jehovah accepted the expiation of the patriarch; and smelled afar off the sweet savor of the Perfect Sacrifice for the guilty world . . . Jesus was the reality of that which every sin-offering typified. The expiation of Christ avails for every sin confessed over the atonement . . . Though the Great Sacrifice avails for all sin, there is no atonement for the obstinate rejector of the sacrifice . . . The entire system of ancient sacrifices was but the shadow of the eternal substance."[25]

"Evangelical Redemption," writes Beet, "is the deliverance of sinners from the penalty and power of sin by the costly means of the death of Christ . . . For by himself suffering death, the penalty of sin, Christ shelters the sinner from the penalty due to his sins."[26] "Because we had no victim to offer, God set forth Christ to be a sacrifice to shelter those who believe from the punishment due to their sins."[27] "The death of Christ was absolutely needful for the salvation of men."[28] "The voluntary passion of our Lord," says another Methodist divine, "appeased the Father's wrath. This ransom, from the dignity of the person redeeming, was more than equivalent for all mankind."[29] "Christ's sacrifice means whatever the Jewish sacrifices meant," says Banks, "and

[25] W. B. Pope: Compendium of Christian Theology, II, pp. 225–230.
[26] J. Agar Beet: Through Christ to God, pp. 152–161.
[27] J. Agar Beet: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 123.
[28] J. Agar Beet: Nature and Christ, p. 88.
[29] W. I. Shaw: Digest of the Doctrinal Standards of the Methodist Church, p. 60

on this point doubt is impossible. Christ's death is a Propitiation. Propitiation is the appeasing of anger."[30] "He is our Saviour" says Machen, "not because he has inspired us to live the same kind of life that he lived, but because he took upon himself the dreadful guilt of our sins and bore it instead of us upon the cross . . The Lord Jesus has paid the full penalty of our sins."[31]

"The word propitiation," says Burwash, "means a power in a sacrificial offering to move God to forgiveness. Such a power no Jew would be disposed to deny. The sacrifices appointed by God must possess power to secure forgiveness."[32] For this reason Forsythe declares, "New Testament Christianity is a priestly religion or it is nothing. It gathers about a priestly cross on earth and a great High Priest in the heavens."[33]

Liberal Christians have protested against this entire priestly system and not in vain. It interposes theological fictions between men and God which confuse the conscience in an effort to save the soul. "Here is the verdict against sin," said Martineau, "the soul that sinneth it shall die. And how is that verdict executed? The soul that had sinned does *not* die and one that "knew no sin" dies instead. And this is called a divine union of truth and mercy; being the most precise negation of both. First, to hang the destinies of mankind upon a solitary volition of their first parents, and then let loose a diabolic power on that volition to break it down; to vitiate the human constitution in punishment for the Fall, and yet to continue to demand obedience to the original and perfect moral law; to assert the absolute inflexibility of that holy law, yet all the while to have in view for the offenders a method of escape, which violates every one of its provisions, and makes it a solemn pretence; to forgive that which is in itself

[30] J. S. Banks: Manual of Christian Doctrine, p. 138.
[31] J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, pp. 117, 135.
[32] N. Burwash: Handbook on Romans, p. 75.
[33] P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 12.

unpardonable on condition of the suicide of a God—is to shock and confound all notions of rectitude, without affording even the sublimity of savage grandeur. This will be called blasphemy; and so it is; but the blasphemy is not in the words but in the *thing*."[34]

As a clearer discrimination between the priestly and the prophetic elements in Christianity spreads, the vogue of this ancient dogma and all it represents must gradually fade out of the faith of men, as the grim mythologies of the Orient have on which it is based. "This disappearing theory," says George Harris, "fails to satisfy because it is immoral, because it places salvation somewhere else than in character, because it converts the sympathy and love of Christ into legal fictions, because it places the ethical demands of justice above the ethical necessities of love."[35]

Although we no longer regard the cross of Christ as the scene of an atoning sacrifice to propitiate the Father and cancel the penalties of sin, we may at least agree with Fleming: "In general, one may say that the death of Christ constituted the final test of His moral Personality, and in passing through it unscathed and triumphant, He opened to men new springs of moral inspiration. The Cross has entered into the moral manhood of the world; it has put a seal on teaching which will endure; it has set before men the highest example of love and unselfish devotion to the cause of humanity, and has thus been fruitful of world-defying and death-defying heroisms."[36]

In the words of Glover: "Forgiveness, Jesus teaches or suggests, is primarily a question between Father and son, and he tries to lead us to believe how ready the Father is to settle the question. Once it is settled, we find, in fact, Father and son setting to work to mend

[34]James Martineau: Studies in Christianity, p. 99, note.
[35]George Harris: Moral Evolution, p. 408.
[36]J. Dick Fleming: Redemption, p. 286.

the past; the evil seed has been sown and the sad crop must be reaped; the man who has sowed it has a right to reap it—that much we see. But Jesus hints that God himself loves to come in and help His reconciled son with the reaping. Even when the crop of evil is in the lives of others, the most horrible outcome of sin, God is still in the field."[37]

Progressive Christianity takes this view of the relations between men and their Creator. As men gain the filial spirit and partake of the divine nature, they learn that they "must bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.' The prevalence of this self-sacrificing goodness, the spirit of generosity and mutual aid, in the Christian interpretation of life, is said to be the supreme witness to the very presence of the spirit of God in the hearts of men.

"A religion which is going to be any good in such a world," says Ellwood, "must stress a sacrificial, redeeming love toward all men as the supreme need—a love which leads men to sacrifice themselves without stint or limit in order to serve mankind . . . Sacrifice as an end in itself cannot be justified by either sound religion or sound science; but sacrifice as a means of human service is altogether a different matter. Social religion regards sacrifice when prompted by love and made for the sake of human service the supreme measure of the ethical and religious spirit."[38]

When religion is disencumbered of its priestly misunderstandings, as it was freed from them by Christ and the prophets, we find in it a profound philosophy concerning the ethical and social life of men; they must in affiliation with the Creative Power, whose laws are expressed in the moral order, remedy the injuries wrought by sin with the ministries of love, and finally, with the Divine coöperation, bring the evil-doer to repentance and amendment of life.

[37] T. R. Glover: The Jesus of History, p. 172.
[38] C. A. Ellwood: The Reconstruction of Religion, p. 176.

May we not then say with Macintosh: "Viewing the whole atoning, redeeming work of Jesus as the best individual revelation of what God is doing and seeking to do for men, we are led to infer that God, who as Holy Spirit, was in Christ and is the Christlike reconciling the world unto Himself, loves the sinner, while hating the sin, and is in some deep sense burdened by it. The unselfish love and self-devotion of Jesus to the redemption of the world from sin and its evil consequences, and what he suffered on behalf of those he sought to help, and even at the hands of some of them, give us a glimpse of what is actually going on in the life of God. . . . There is no atonement in the sense of expiation, save repentance and its consequences, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well."[39]

The disciples of Christ are called to accept their share of the burden of reconciling the world to the moral reign of God; they are also to be saviors of men. They become servants and sons of the Highest along with Jesus. They are not to be priests interceding with God for men but sons interceding with men for God. "It is to be noted," says Stevens, "that the office of Servant is prophetic not priestly. It is the suffering of actual experience that falls upon him. The vicariousness is ethical. The blood of this offering is the blood of real life. If we are to use the word "substitution" we should say that the substitution here involved, is that which takes place when one puts himself under another's burdens and from love and sympathy makes that other's suffering lot his own. This idealization of God's holy Servant is *not drawn from the Levitical ritual.* . . The greatest deficiency which theology has found in the teaching of Jesus is that he does not recognize the existence of any obstacle to forgiveness which requires

[39] D. C. Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, pp. 167, 171.

to be removed by propitiation before He can exercise forgiving grace. . . [40]

This greatest deficiency which theology has found in the teachings of Jesus is the principal defect found by the conservative in the teachings of a Progressive Christianity, which repudiates frankly the doctrines of all priestly religions. It stoutly maintains that no "rejuvenescent Judaism" of the priestly type can be a true interpretation of the principles of Christ nor of the realities of life.

[40]George B. Stevens: The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, pp. 33, 345.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL IDEALISM AND THE OLD GOSPEL

"If thou could'st in vision see thyself the man God meant,
Thou never more would'st be the man thou art,—content."

ANONYMOUS.

The true religious liberal will honor the "old gospel," even though he remain unresponsive to the appeal of its doctrines. He will feel like joining Vachel Lindsay in celebrating the march of General Booth and his wonderful army into heaven:

"Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
The saints smiled gravely and said, "He's come."
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail,
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,
Unwashed legions from the ways of death—
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

There is much more to the "Calvary Cure" than a questionable theology. It is instinct with a social passion for the redemption of the outcast and weak, an outpouring of divine love for the unworthy, of hope for the hopeless, of life out of death, and the ministry of kindly hearts to the friendless and lost.

Plato tells us that the young philosopher is like the puppy. He must tear things to pieces when he is teething. This destructive mood of young radicalism, however helpful in disposing of old bones, sometimes works much harm by its rough handling of living things. So it is with the attacks of irreverent skepticism on the old gospel and its doctrines. The truth embodied in its ancient doctrines suffers with the error. No form of

faith entirely false could have so enriched the world with noble lives. By comparison with them, supercilious intellectuals cut a sorry figure, when the sum of their wisdom amounts to the heartless abandonment of a hard task and the rejection of crude methods of salvation for none at all. The world is sick with sin and misery, and bungling methods of bringing faith, hope, and love into darkened lives are far more admirable than an arm-chair rationalism that feasts on truth and beauty, leaving Lazarus helpless in his rags and wretchedness.

In avoiding the negations of skepticism we must guard against the opposite danger of credulity. Christians have had many strange delusions and none more baseless than their fancy that their saints were infallibly guided in their perception of the truth. Fictitious authority has thus been given to beliefs handed down by tradition, and to abandon them has been deemed a sacrilege. Yet no error, though believed for a thousand years, is as sacred as the truth discovered yesterday. Heralds of the old gospel have too often mistaken credulity for faith. They glibly gibe at philosophy as "foolosophy," and rejoice that the wisdom of God is hidden from the scientific and revealed to the humble who will not raise embarrassing questions. Pulpits resound with archaic traditions, while a long-suffering people stifle their aversion to them as sinful, and repeat what they are taught, as a sacred duty. A less submissive generation arises and taking their elders at their word, believes that no one can be a Christian who is not loyal to the ancient faith. Not being able to believe the statements of the creeds, they conclude they are hopelessly alienated from the Church.

The imperishable truth at the heart of the old gospel is that love is the power of God in our human world to redeem men and society. Around this central theme have gathered in every age the speculations and opinions of men. Every preacher of the redeeming power of love

has his own favorite system of theology with which to enforce his message. We are prepared to admit that our contemporary preachers are errant mortals; let us be quite as frank about the dead. Though we may be forced to abandon many of the beliefs of a Moses, a Paul, a Luther, a Wesley, or a Booth, yet their names are immortal in the history of the race they so nobly served. We are their followers, not as we perpetuate the opinions they held in their day, but only as we use the knowledge that we possess in our day, with the same spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the highest spiritual interests of men.

According to evangelical tradition the old gospel is not merely a champion of this truth concerning the redeeming love of God but the sole custodian of a particular and exclusive way in which that redeeming power reaches men. It flows to men only through the channel of the "Plan of Salvation" defined and described in the evangelical creeds. To have the right kind of belief in this plan of salvation is indispensable to right relations with God. Love acts to redeem only in response to the right kind of faith in this scheme of redemption.

"Christian faith," said John Wesley, "is then, not only assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death and resurrection; a recumbency on him as our atonement and our life . . . Whatsoever virtues (so-called), a man may have, whatsoever good works he may do, it profiteth not, he is still a child of wrath, still under the curse, till he believes in Jesus."[1] A more recent exponent of this traditional orthodoxy writes: "We deserved eternal death but the Lord Jesus because he loved us died instead of us upon the cross . . . He who believes in Christ simply accepts the sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary . . . It is perfectly true that no mere man can pay the penalty of another's sin. But

[1]John Wesley: Sermons on Salvation by Faith, and Justification by Faith.

it does not follow that Jesus could not do it, for Jesus was no mere man but the Eternal Son of God. The Christian doctrine of the atonement is altogether rooted in the Christian doctrine of the Deity of Christ."[2] The whole system is a logical unit, forming a complete philosophy of the relations between God and men, of the conditions under which the mercy of God may be granted and the means ordained by heaven for the infusion of spiritual life into a sinful world.

In contrast with this position, Progressive Christianity would say with Lyman Abbott: "The Gospel is not the good news that guilty men may be saved from punishment, but the good news that guilty men may be made virtuous. In a word, salvation is character . . . Atonement no longer means to me that Christ has made reparation to God for wrong I have done and therefore reconciled God to me. It means that Christ has, by his life and teaching, interpreted God to me and by his personal presence inspires in me the will to do my Father's will and so has reconciled me to God."[3]

Chastened in thought by the victories of science and curbed in their practices by the laws of liberty-loving peoples, the churches have become broadened and humanized. Because they largely ignore the logic of their dogmas they have become better than their creeds. However, many churches still remain in which the conviction is held that disbelievers in the dogmas of the "old gospel" are doomed to a terrible experience at the hands of an angry God. But it seems scarcely credible that people actually do believe this as firmly as they think they do while in church. Most of these same people, out of the goodness of their hearts, would energetically protest if the Lord should really underwrite the program they advertise in His name. But, whether they like it or not, these old dogmas of the ancient faith have come

[2]J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, p. 117 ff.
[3]Lyman Abbott: What Christianity Means to Me, p. 140.

to have as little value for Progressive Christianity as the arcana of alchemy or the horoscopes of astrology have for modern science.

In religion as taught by Christ, we are offered an interpretation of the will of God concerning men. It presents a pattern of personal character to be attained through faith in, and obedience to, spiritual laws and a pattern of social life by which it is to be organized on the principles of brotherhood, justice and good will. The cooperation of the Divine Spirit with men in the achievement of these ideals is taken for granted by him because of his fundamental faith in the Fatherhood of God. The end in view is deliverance from individual selfishness and social injustice by the infusion of the love of God and man into the hearts of men. How this may best be accomplished is a social problem as well as a religious problem. It is a problem that calls upon science and sociology, ethics and psychology to lend a hand. It cannot be solved by traditional dogmas believed upon authority. Christ presents the goal to be reached and inspires men with faith to seek its attainment, but men must find the ways and means to remove the obstacles in the way. Mankind will reach the goal, not by some magic outcome of believing in the merits of one sacrificial life of peerless goodness, but by multitudinous sacrifices and services, undertaken in the spirit of him, who set them such a shining example. And numbered among those who have rendered the highest services to the race. with the devotion of unselfish love, have been heretic and heathen as well as orthodox saints.

Such a conception is fatal to the belief that salvation is of the Jews only or of reactionary tradition only. It universalizes the activity of the Divine Spirit as the source of all human goodness, and affirms the faith that where love is, God is, and that where God is there will be found the grace to overcome evil in all its forms. In this view, as Sir Henry Jones has said, "*All* history is

sacred—the object of a love that is not limited nor partial and of a care that is not intermittent—or *none* of it is sacred. God is everywhere, sustaining by His holy will and unfailing loving-kindness the tottering footsteps of mankind in all its toilsome ascent toward its native spiritual altitudes, or He is nowhere, and there *is* no God."[4]

The basic principles of the religion that Christ preached are not to be learned from the priestly religion of Israel, nor from the speculations of Greek philosophy. They must be learned from the precept and practice of Christ himself, who made it his meat to do the Father's will. Aspiring to a life that is better than their best, men may enter upon the same sacred way, each bearing his own cross of self-sacrifice.

Sitting at the feet of Christ we learn that character such as his is the product of obedience to that spirit of love in the heart which he identifies with the spirit of God. It is creative within the inner world of the soul. Only resistance to the promptings of that spirit excludes men from the kingdom of God. To obey is to have the faith that saves. The character acquired through this obedience is salvation. That the concepts of the mind shall through study and observation be according to truth is of vital importance for human welfare, but extraordinary knowledge alone would only make intellectual prodigies, not true men. Though every thought were true, the mind untouched by love would shine like sunlight through translucent walls of ice. Only the goodness born of love gives knowledge that radiant energy which builds and beautifies the perfect human life:

> "Love preceding
> Power, and with much power, always much more love;
> Love still too straightened in his present means,
> And earnest for new power to set love free."

[4]Henry Jones: Idealism as a Practical Creed, p. 246.

In line with the teaching of Jesus is the conception of the gospel declared by Channing: "It is the doctrine that God purposes, in His unbounded Fatherly love, to perfect the human soul; to purify it from all sin; to create it in his own image; to fill it with his own spirit; to unfold it forever; to raise it to life and immortality."[5] If that be true, such a divine purpose cannot be nullified by the changing theologies of men. Its fulfillment depends solely upon the faith of men in the reality of that purpose and upon their voluntary cooperation for the attainment of its ends. Through the influence of Christ and of all Christlike men that faith is strengthened and that cooperation secured. "The good life," says Bertrand Russell, "is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge."[6]

Numerous obstructions to this higher life of man exist in our human constitution and in the current forms of organized society. These cannot be removed by sacramental magic nor by theological incantations. They must be overcome by the consecrated wisdom of applied science and self-sacrificing love. It is to the removal of these obstructions that men must devote themselves, and in the process of their removal the potential energies within human nature will develop from within to bear all "the fruits of the spirit." And these will be none the less gifts of God because, like the grain and the flowers, they are rooted in nature and are subject to the laws of nature.

Spiritual as well as intellectual and social progress depends upon learning how to master and control the forces of nature. Prayers and holy water were not enough to conquer bubonic plague and smallpox. These diseases challenged the minds of men to find remedies and in searching for them many of the secrets of nature were discovered. Progress in every department of life is

[5]William E. Channing: The Perfect Life, p. 220.
[6]Bertrand Russell: What I Believe, p. 20.

subject to that kind of education. God sets the problems; it is the glory of men to solve them. Broken bones remain unset or are crookedly united until men study the human body and become skillful in surgery. Nature provides many healing remedies; the leucocytes of the blood devour invading bacteria and protect health, but when hostile invasion takes place in overwhelming force medical science is born out of the forced effort to meet the situation. The sufferings of life are whips to drive us to gain a better understanding of the system of nature in which we live and out of the effort thus forced on us, the sciences are born and the faculties of men are educated. True faith is not shown in begging the Almighty to do for us what we should learn to do for ourselves, but in trusting the divine wisdom that has ordained the order of the world in which we live, and in accepting the disciplines of life which it sets us as the best means of attaining human progress. This means that the task before us is to systematize all knowledge and to bring it into the service of humanity, in the spirit of unselfish devotion to the common good, to produce better men in a better world. In this way we learn to share the creative power of God and enter into our heritage as His children.

Prayer, in such a view of the life-program, becomes a means of adjustment to the will of God, an expression of aspiration after the divine perfections, a fellowship with Him in His creative purposes. It is one of the processes of nature by which the human is attuned to the divine. It is a lawful source of inward strength and moral power, not a cheap method of frustrating the laws of nature. It is the fuse through which currents of spiritual power, flowing from the Unseen may reenforce without overwhelming the soul. It is not a way to escape responsibility but a preparation to assume it.

It follows from this that the moral and social idealism of Christ implies the possession of a certain creative

freedom on the part of both the individual and the group in the choice of the purposes of life and of means to attain them. It defines and rebukes sin as the choice of the baser ends of life in the presence of the power to choose the better, and summons men to cleave to the highest purposes of life in the presence of lower attractions. It recognizes moral freedom and creative ability as actual characteristics of men within the limits of the human world. "My son," said Thomas a Kempis, "thou oughtest with all diligence to endeavour that, in every place and action, and in all outward business, thou be inwardly free, and thoroughly master of thyself; and that all things be under thee and not thou under them."[7] Or, as John Oxenham wrote:

> "But to every man there openeth
> A High way and a Low,
> And every man decideth
> The Way his soul shall go."

This moral sovereignty is denied to human nature by philosophic determinism. A man, it says, is but an organic automaton which must wiggle-waggle through life as nature pulls the strings. Men may pity and help one another but neither praise nor blame. Each one inherits a complex laboratory, called his body, whose secretions produce the illusion that he is a living mind, with some power of self-direction. In reality he is but a helpless derivative of forces hereditary and of forces that play upon him from his environment.

Thus, Clarence Darrow says: "Man is in no sense a maker of himself and has no more power than any other machine to escape the law of cause and effect. Therefore, there is no such thing as moral responsibility in the sense in which the expression is ordinarily used . . . There is no such thing as moral guilt . . . Man works according to his structure. He never does reform

[7] Thomas a Kempis: The Imitation of Christ, Bk. III, chap. 38.

and cannot reform."[8] Human behaviour is explained in terms of physics and chemistry. A man can be only what his inherited brain structure and internal secretions, over which he has no control, make him. It is as useless to expect men to be other than nature makes them as it is to expect a Negro to be other than black. As Robert Blatchford wrote, "Man is a creature of Heredity and Environment . . . Heredity gives him his nature. Environment modifies his nature. No man can select his ancestors; no man can select his environment."[9]

Yet, even the advocates of this materialistic view of life cannot entirely free themselves from the illusions they condemn; at least they use expressions that imply the ability of a man to take a hand in modifying the world by voluntary effort. Mr. Darrow says, "It is necessary for him not only to learn how to curb the evil but also how to increase the good."[10] In his diatribes against religion, Mr. Blatchford, like many of his kind, is guilty of the same inconsistency. He says, "Let us look, for an instant, at the truest and best form of Christianity and ask what it is doing. It is preaching about sin, sin, sin. It is praying to God to do for man what man ought to do for himself, what man can do for himself, what man must do for himself."[11] Bertrand Russell declares: "It is we who create value, and our desires which confer value. In this realm we are kings, and we debase our kingship if we bow down to nature. It is for us to determine the good life, not for nature—not even for nature personified as God . . ." His closing prediction is of a time "when men have acquired the same dominion over their own passions that they already have over the physical forces of the external world. Then at last we shall have won our freedom."[12]

[8]Clarence Darrow: Crime; Its Cause and Treatment, pp. 274, 128, 276.
[9]Robert Blatchford: God and My Neighbor, p. 142.
[10]Clarence Darrow: Crime; Its Cause and Treatment, p. 179.
[11]Robert Blatchford: God and My Neighbor, p. 184.
[12]Bertrand Russell: What I Believe, pp. 17, 87.

There are many elements of plausibility in biologic and economic determinism. As we live in a physical body which functions in a material world we may trace in all events a linked chain of physical sequences. The fallacy lies in the assumption that the Living Will belongs to this chain of sequences and is not itself a cause that cannot be entirely accounted for by chemical reactions. It is of course possible to say, as William James points out, that the will which seems to breast the tide is but a portion of the tide, driven by forces over which it has absolutely no control. The only judge is our own consciousness, and if that be deceived we are plunged into universal skepticism, for what can we know with certainty on any subject if the consciousness of moral freedom be a delusion? We think we can choose the right-hand road or the left, without any compulsion beyond the inner conviction that one road leads to our destination and the other does not. We think we can tell the truth or lie, steal or not steal, choose between whisky and water. The inherited impulses may be strong, the power of acquired habits may be insistent, but we can make headway against them and feel the full responsibility for the choices we make. We can learn how to curb the evil and how to increase the good within us. We can inhibit some impulses and follow others; we can weaken the strong and strengthen the weak; we can seek the good or cherish the evil.

"How then," says William McDougall, "are we to account for the fact that the conduct of the good man is in the main regulated according to the promptings of these weaker desires, and against the stronger, more urgent promptings of the more primitive desires? It is this appearance of the overcoming of the stronger by the weaker impulse or motive in so many cases of right action following upon a conflict of motives and the exercise of moral effort, that leads James to define moral

action as action in the line of greatest resistance."[13]

That there are limits placed on the exercise of human volition by natural law and physical organization is self-evident. From the scientific point of view, I think Patrick properly describes the situation in saying: "In fact, throughout the whole evolutionary movement, nature seems to be struggling to free itself from the mechanistic chains, trying like a growing child to acquire a will of its own. Evolution has been described as a long struggle for freedom. When living organisms reach the stage represented by the human mind, vital interests become conscious. Behaviour is deliberately adapted to the realization of definite ends. The human mind escapes from the control of circumstances—indeed, circumstances themselves are controlled in order to realize purposes. The value of different possible courses of conduct is appraised, and means consciously chosen to gain the higher values. To a situation like this the old phraseology of determinism is still less adapted than to the situation represented by organic life in its lower stages. The language of freedom, while not wholly adequate, seems here more appropriate."[14]

The tether which binds us and restrains us from the exercise of absolute freedom of action is not one of the same fixed and unchangeable length. It is subject to increase by intelligence and moral control. An increase of freedom through education and moral growth is each man's birthright. "When we use the law to foresee consequences," says Dewey, "and to consider how they may be averted or secured, then freedom begins. Employing knowledge of law to enforce desire in execution gives power to the engineer. Employing knowledge of law in order to submit to it without further action constitutes fatalism, no matter how it is dressed up. Thus we recur to our main contention. Morality depends upon

[13]William McDougall: Social Psychology, p. 236.
[14]G. T. W. Patrick: The World and Its Meaning, p. 333.

events, not upon commands and ideals alien to nature. But intelligence treats events as moving, as fraught with possibilities, not as ended, final. In forecasting their possibilities, the distinction between better and worse arises. Human desire and ability cooperate with this or that natural force according as this or that eventuality is judged better. We do not use the present to control the future. We use the foresight of the future to refine and expand present activities. In this use of desire, deliberation and choice, freedom is actualized."[15]

We are not responsible for the greater or less caliber of our brain structure, but for the right use of what capacity we possess; not responsible for the environment into which we are born but for capitalizing those things in it which are favorable to the highest ends of life. We sacrifice the freedom of momentary choices for the ease of habitual action, but habits are not unchangeable. The machinery of life is driven by forces that obey their natural laws, but our hands are on the levers. In other words, our lives are plastic, and if we choose to rise to the higher levels of moral goodness out of the mire of sensualism and materialism, we shall find an open way. We may thus become heroes or cowards, honest men or thieves, saints or sinners, worthy of praise or blame, within the elastic boundaries of human liberty, according to the use we make of our opportunities.

Progressive Christianity opens to the inner vision boundless possibilities for men. It is the religion of the higher development of humanity through cooperation with the divine power resident in nature. It seeks to arouse aspiration for the highest life and to induce men to resolve strenuously upon its attainment. It makes education and science its allies. It accepts as the divine will the purposes outlined by Christ for the individual and for society. It emphasizes the important maxim of psychology: "Seize the very first possible opportunity to

[15]John Dewey: Human Nature and Conduct, p. 312.

act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience, *in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain.*"[16]

This process of character development is admirably described by Pierce: "But most of us have evil mixed with good in our inheritance. When we follow our impulses, good or bad, we are determined by our physical heredity; we are inwardly determined but not inwardly free. When we exercise our inherited power of reasoning to curb some activities and support others because we see such conduct is rational, then in so far as we succeed, we are inwardly free. Only in some such sense have freedom and a virtuous life any meaning for me. This power for rational conduct is *not fixed, but may be augmented.*"[17]

Speaking as a scientist, Conklin declares: "This debilitating philosophy in which everything is predetermined, in which there is no possibility of change or control, in which there is hypertrophy of intellect and atrophy of will, is a symptom of senility in men and nations. We need to return to the joys of a childhood age in which men believed themselves free to do, to think, to strive, in which life was full of high endeavour and the world crowded with great emprise. We need to think of the possibilities of development as well as the limitations of heredity."[18]

The moral idealism of Christ was founded on this deep conviction, that in every man are reservoirs of power which may be tapped and the spiritual energy secured by which to form the life according to love and righteousness. Nothing science has yet discovered prevents us from joining Conklin in the belief that every man has sufficient freedom to begin the upward ascent toward the highest life.

[16]William James: Psychology, Briefer Course, pp. 142–150.
[17]Edgar Pierce: The Philosophy of Character, p. 411.
[18]E. G. Conklin: Heredity and Environment, p. 497.

And so, says Martineau, Christ "addresses himself to the individual conscience; indulges in no dreams of a renovated world without till he has flung his appeal to the man within; looks there for the creative and vital forces, which are to make all things new. He speaks to his hearers, not as passive creatures who might look about them for some position in which it might befall them to be good, but to beings conscious of internal power to strive and win the excellence they love; to grapple athletically with the oppositions of circumstances; and run the appointed race, though with panting breath and bleeding feet."[19]

This much must be conceded to determinism, that we do live in a system of nature where there are fixed connections, commonly called causes and consequences. Human intelligence, however, has won its greatest victories by learning these connections and using this knowledge to secure desirable ones and avoid those it does not approve. The system is flexible to the extent that one force may be set in motion against another to neutralize or overcome its consequences, as when a stone is lifted and thrown. The gravitational cause which holds it to the earth is overcome by the volitional, expressed in contracting muscles which seize and hurl the stone. This is true in spiritual as well as in physical affairs. We have no more right to expect spiritual perfection under some conditions of human life than to expect orange groves in Greenland. In the complexity of human life, habit, heredity, and environment do not finally determine what human life shall be but set the conditions that must be faced and controlled in the higher development of that life. That which finally determines character is the submission or resistance of the human will, guided by intelligence, to the conditions and forces that it faces.

[19]James Martineau: Endeavours after the Christian Life, p. 79.

When a swimmer is struggling with a current too strong for him and is in danger of drowning, it is no disparagement of religion to say that a rope or a raft will be of more value to him than the prayers of all the churches. Perhaps it may be said that it is no disparagement of rope or raft to say that a prayer to God which brings his panic fears to heel may also be of great value to him. This principle is of wide application. The moral order is enmeshed in a complicated web of physical and social forces which may repress or sustain moral effort. Defective endocrine glands may throw the whole mechanism of organic life into disorder, becloud the mind, and enfeeble the will. Unemployment and slum conditions may so undermine moral resistance as to convert an honest man into a criminal. All the prayers of Christendom will not avert the horrors of war unless the nations are willing to act as they pray and set up and use political and judicial machinery, such as is provided in the League of Nations and the International Court of Justice, to remove all excuse for war. The development of the finest type of moral life in men depends thus, not only upon individual initiative but also upon social action. The improvement of home conditions and discipline, the proper feeding of children, social hygiene, sound practical and industrial education, insurance against periodical unemployment and its demoralizing effects, fraternal cooperation mutual aid and material relief, eugenics, surgical and medical care—all such agencies concerned with providing an environment conducive to good living and with the prevention of activities which lower vitality and moral resistance to evil—have a part to play in realizing the purposes of Christianity in the world.

The mainspring of these powerful agencies has been religious faith. Out of this faith springs loyalty to the family, to the community and to God and the willingness to sacrifice selfish interests to the public welfare. As

Patrick writes: "Impulsive motives are stronger than prudential motives. Tell men that the unrighteous shall perish and they will do unrighteousness still—even though they know that the consequences of wrong-doing are fatally sure, falling upon them, or their kin or their social group; but once call out the spirit of devotion—to God or to Master, or to friend, to husband, wife or lover, to church or party, even to club or fraternity, and they will undergo hardship and practise self-denial. Religion teaches that the universe is friendly—that God is love, and that deeper down than the law of competition there is the law of cooperation; that altruism is as primordial as egoism. It teaches that in our struggle for right the Universe is on our side—so the struggle is not in vain."[20] In the power of this spirit of loyalty and faith, men learn how to triumph over heredity and environment and win the larger liberty. Every heroic soul is a witness to this truth. But such is the solidarity of human life that none can be perfectly saved until all are; we rise and fall together.

If we have come under the spell of this vision of duty and destiny, we may say with Peabody: "The Church becomes not so much an association of saints as an association of saviours, not so much a witness of redemption as an instrument of redemption, not so much an ark of refuge as a missionary ship. Vastly larger than any claim of ecclesiasticism is the sphere of the ministry which the present age suggests. Employers of labor promoting justice; artisans serving God with their hands; patient bearers of burdens and brave protestants against wrong; the thinkers of God's thought and the doers of God's will; nurses tending the poor and physicians risking their lives—what are these and many more whose social service has become personal joy, but ministers of a socialized religion and instruments of God's purpose for our time? . . . The ministry of religion

[20] G. T. W. Patrick: The World and Its Meaning, p. 424.

associates in one vocation all who seek first God's kingdom and righteousness; and many a solitary servant of that cause takes heart again as he finds himself surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, and runs with greater patience the race which is set before him."[21]

Looking back at us from a future state of society imagined to be much better than our own, Edward Bellamy said with much truth: "The religion of Christ, depending as it did upon the experience and intuitions of unselfish enthusiasms, could not possibly be accepted or understood generally in a world which tolerated a social system based upon fratricidal struggle as a condition of existence. Prophets, messiahs, seers and saints, might indeed for themselves see God face to face, but it was impossible that there should be any general apprehension of God as Christ saw him until social justice had brought in brotherly love. Man must be revealed as brother before God could be revealed as Father. . . . The great enthusiasm for humanity which overthrew the old order and brought in a fraternal society was not primarily a godward aspiration at all . . . It was essentially a humane movement. It was a melting and flowing of men's hearts toward one another, a rush of contrite, repentant tenderness, an impassioned impulse of mutual love and self-devotion to the common weal. But 'if we love one another God dwelleth in us.' And so they found it."[22]

The new evangelism will use every available means to cause these deep fountains of human love to flow forth to fill the world with joy, good will, and peace. It will proclaim the truth that he who loves his brother loves God also. All the obstructions are on our human side and are thus removable and waiting to be removed. There are none on the divine side. No sacrifice to appease the wrath of God is needed, only simple willing-

[21] F. G. Peabody: The Approach to the Social Question, pp. 198, 202.
[22] Edward Bellamy: Equality, p. 268 ff.

ness to abide in the love of God. All the evils that afflict the world have their true source in the ignorance and selfishness of men, and these it is the glory of man to find a way to overcome. To destroy the evil and to increase the good in human life by every social, scientific, and moral agency, that the "will of God may be done on earth as in heaven" is the long task of mankind, and he who serves with fidelity and faith will learn at last that the universe is not a soulless machine but the dwelling place of God.

CHAPTER VI

FAITH, REASON, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Call him not heretic whose works attest
His faith in goodness, by no creed confessed."
WHITTIER.

According to Progressive Christianity, the gospel preached by Christ is essentially the declaration of the Fatherly love of God and of His purpose to perfect men and women in His moral likeness. It is a call for personal and social repentance, such as will unite them with God through faith, love and obedience, for the achievement of that high purpose. It offers the example and teaching of Christ as a sure guide to that Way of Life. The obedience required is to be prompted and sustained by faith in the moral and spiritual principles enunciated by Christ and in Christ himself as their best interpreter.

That which is to be believed by those who become the disciples of Christ is not any system of metaphysics, philosophy, or theology. Such systems change with increasing knowledge and the progress of civilization. No one of them is a faithful reproduction, in all respects, of the essential Christian gospel. That which is to be believed is the authority of the moral law as a condition of human progress and happiness, and the duty of seeking the spiritual values revealed by Christ to his Galilean disciples as the supreme good. If deeper theological ideas are implied in this faith, right relations between man and man or God and man are not contingent upon their elaboration.

The unity of a church should, therefore, depend not upon uniformity of belief, but upon that unity of the spirit which enables men who may differ in opinions still

to love and serve one another. What one thinks to be true identifies him with a school of philosophy, but it is his moral attitude toward life, his spiritual purpose, his ideals of character and conduct, his intention to overcome selfishness and sin, his readiness to show brotherly kindness and good will in social intercourse, his reverence toward God and love toward men, which qualify him to be a disciple of Christ. Hence Progressive Christianity holds that men should unite not on the basis of a creed but of such a covenant as that of many liberal churches, "In the love of Truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of Man."

Loyalty to the same ideals is consistent with division of labor and diversified methods of realizing them. Equally good Americans differ about the tariff, socialism, prohibition, taxation, and the League of Nations. Hence the need of free discussion that the truth in all its phases may become better known, and of careful experimentation that better practical results may be obtained. The great common foe which Christians must unite to overcome is the inherent selfishness of men and the sins that spring from it. Groups will form around special theories, such as may be found among students of biology or of any of the sciences. Any of them may be wrong but all may be equally loyal to the common purpose of finding out the truth. Not otherwise should it be in the Church. The sects should correspond closely to different schools of science, among whom liberty of thought, discussion, and organization is found indispensable to the fulfillment of their common purpose. So long as men think seriously about the great themes of religion there will continue to be theological groups holding different opinions, and they become a menace to unity and progress only as they become dogmatic, exclusive, turbulent, or intolerant. Theology will always remain one of the major subjects of intellectual interest and its problems will present a perrenial challenge to

the human mind. It is, however, not loyalty to the fixed dogmas of a particular school of theology, ancient or modern, that constitutes one a Christian, but loyalty to the ethical and spiritual ideals of Christ. It is the recognition of this principle, far more than mere differences of belief, which differentiates the progressive from the dogmatic Christian.

To make this quite clear, we have but to recall the fact that dogmatic Christianity puts the emphasis on belief of certain doctrinal statements as integral to the faith which delivers from the penalties and power of sin. Without belief in the occurrence of all the events described in the Bible and without belief in the authorized interpretations of them, one may be a very good or wise man, but one cannot be a Christian. With utmost frankness the Roman Church declares: "He who wilfully disbelieves a single doctrine of the Catholic Church has no true faith. A faith that does not comprise all the doctrines of the Catholic Church is no faith at all."[1] The reason for this is thus stated, "Creeds are verbal, concrete expressions of the truths revealed by God and guaranteed to the world by the divine and infallible witness of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit."[2] To doubt a dogma of the Church is thus made equivalent to a contradiction of God and when this happens faith is destroyed. Evangelical Protestantism may no longer say this as bluntly as it once did but the same principle lies embalmed in its creeds. The somewhat obsolete Athanasian Creed stated it very forcibly. To win salvation the rigidly prescribed set of beliefs must be kept "whole and undefiled" for without them one must "perish everlastingly."

Discussing the origin of this dogmatic system, Hatch writes: "Under the influence of contemporary Greek thought the word faith came to be transferred from

[1]Francis Spirago: The Catechism Explained, p. 91.
[2]Bertrand L. Conway: Question Box, Paulist Fathers, p. 88.

simple trust in God to mean the acceptance of a series of propositions in abstract metaphysics . . . It checked the progress of Christianity . . . The victories it [Christianity] has won, it has won by preaching, not Greek metaphysics, but the love of God and man. Its darkest pages are those which record the story of its endeavour to force its transformed Greek metaphysics upon men and races to which they were alien."[3]

By the fifth century this transformation of the gospel preached by Jesus was almost complete and its results were fixed in creeds which have to this day remained the standards of orthodox Christian doctrine. "Correct belief," says Myers, "was made an indispensable virtue. Without this there could be no hope of salvation. On the other hand, unbelief, doubt, error, even honest error, were declared to be in the highest degree sinful. The conception of belief as a virtue and doubt as a sin was destined—since it imperils freedom of thought—to have momentous and sinister consequences for the intellectual and moral history of Europe . . . Orthodox theology has never allowed that charity, though combined with perfect uprightness of life and expressed in noblest acts of self-abnegating service of humanity, is a saving virtue, unless associated with correctness of religious belief and the outgrowth of it."[4] This insistence upon intellectual conformity has been the source of all the intolerance, persecution, religious wars, inquisitions, and heresy-hunting, which have disgraced the history of the Church down to the present time.

According to these orthodox standards, Machen is doubtless right in saying: "According to Christian belief, Jesus is our Saviour, not by virtue of what He said, not even by virtue of what He was, but by what He did. He is our Saviour, not because He inspired us to live the same kind of life He lived, but because He took

[3]Edwin Hatch: The Influence of Greek Ideas, etc., p. 340 ff.
[4]P. Van Ness Myers: History as Past Ethics, p. 262.

upon Himself the dreadful guilt of our sins and bore it instead of us upon the cross . . . The man who believes in Christ simply accepts the sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary . . . Very different is the conception of faith which prevails in the liberal church. According to modern liberalism, faith is essentially the same as 'making Christ Master' in one's life." His objection to this ethical faith of Christian liberals is that it "simply means that salvation is thought to be obtained by our obedience to the commands of Christ. Such teaching is just a form of sublimated legalism. Not the sacrifice of Christ, on this view, but our own obedience to God's law, is the ground of hope . . . The grace of God is rejected by modern liberalism. And the result is the slavery of the law, the wretched bondage by which the man undertakes the impossible task of establishing his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance with God."[5]

If this objection be well-founded, it may be well to note that Christ Himself was seriously in error when He said, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." The kind of faith that leads one to make Christ Master and to set out to follow him in his Way of Life does not begin in nor lead to the rejection of the grace of God but to its reception. It does not make our obedience to God's law the ground of hope, but the Fatherly love of God who welcomes all who truly repent and turn from sin to serve Him. It is not a wretched bondage and slavery to any law, but the willing response of those who seek to do the will of God gladly. It is faith that the love of God is such that He requires no sacrifice of blood to appease His wrath, but is more willing to give the holy spirit of love than men are to seek it. So much faith have Christian liberals in the goodness and justice of God that they cannot believe that the eternal salvation of men would

[5] J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, p. 117 ff.

have been frustrated if Pilate had refused to crucify Jesus, or if the mob had relented and clamored for his release instead of for Barabbas, and Jesus had some years later died a natural death in exile.

The faith of Christian liberals is quite consistent with doubt or disbelief of many other of the traditional dogmas of the theologians. "For doubt," said Abelard, "leads to inquiry and by inquiry we arrive at truth." Intellectual integrity impels men to seek for truth and that is impossible without weighing evidence in order that doubtful or erroneous ideas may be corrected. Any form of religion that insists upon a sacrifice of that integrity by condemning doubt and inquiry as sinful becomes the foe of liberty and truth. Schiller says that belief is "a spiritual attitude of welcome towards what we take to be the truth."[6] If that be so and if human knowledge of truth cannot be regarded as offensive to Deity, then both the doubt and the inquiry that leads to truth are in every way consistent with the spiritual attitude of welcome to that which may be learned to be the will of God. The progressive salvation of men depends upon preserving these two spiritual attitudes toward the moral will of God and toward truth, one leading to righteousness and the other to knowledge, and one need not interfere with the other. The fact that one welcomes as true something that is contrary to the authorized dogmas of a church does not unfit him to welcome also the will and the grace of God that make his life Christian. The spirit in which he welcomes truth and the will of God, as learned from all sources, is the decisive factor in his character and salvation, not his repetition on second-hand authority of an antiquated creed, nor his belief of any specific statements about God or Christ or the Bible.

If intelligence does not approve a statement as true one is under no obligation to pretend to believe it; in-

[6] F. C. S. Schiller: Problems of Belief, pp. 14, 86.

deed, such a pretence would introduce falsehood into one's religious life. If we are to be condemned for believing what appears to us to be true, then it would be a catastrophe to be rational. If an error of judgment or a fault in reasoning in the pursuit of truth expose one to the unappeasable wrath of the Almighty, then the possession of reason is a calamity. Were such the case, one would be inclined to pray that his children might be born imbeciles rather than be subject to the inevitable doom thus attached to a normal intellectual life, for even the ultra-conservative exempts imbeciles from damnation. They lack the ability to doubt. We cannot think this to be the attitude of Deity toward the human mind. That which a moral God would condemn is not the frank rejection of what is believed to be untrue, even though it were in reality true, but insincere acquiescence. That which is unchristian is not doubt, dissent nor heresy, but intolerance or a comfortable conformity to error in preference to the truth that may be less popular. When Christians cease to be truth seekers they serve God badly.

In religion the fear of forfeiting the favor of God by doubting a dogma of the Church or a text of Scripture has been the cause of much dishonest belief and half-belief. "Evidently then," says Schiller, "there are great masses of dishonest belief current in the world . . . Moreover, like other forms of dishonesty, the manipulation of belief involves an unprofitable waste of energy and time, which seems destined to continue until the authorities that mould our beliefs acquire a much deeper conviction than they have at present that it is good to speak the truth and shame the devil."[6] In a wider sense than the words were intended to convey at the time, we may say with St. Augustine, "Let every good and true Christian understand that whatever truth may be found it belongs to his Master," and with Justin Martyr,

[6]F. C. S. Schiller: Problems of Belief, pp. 14, 86

"Whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians."[7]

At this point we may note a subtle fallacy introduced by apologists for the dogmas of the creeds. They recognize the irreconcilable distinction in fundamental principles which exists between progressive and traditional Christianity. "The one," says Forsythe, "makes the center of Christianity to be the ideal or spirit of Christ, the other the cross of Christ. One makes the Cross the apotheosis of sacrifice with a main effect on man, the other makes it the Atonement with its first effect on God . . . The latter postulates the Deity of Christ, the other but his relative divinity."[7] The latter demands two kinds of belief, first, belief of the dogmas stated; second, such belief in Christ as will lead the man to repent of sin and follow his Way of Life. These two kinds of belief are united into one act of faith and the experience of moral improvement and inner peace which follows is pointed to as proof that the dogmas believed are true. The faith that simply leads one to follow in the Way of Life taught by Jesus is said to be insufficient qualification, when divorced from the dogmatic belief, for admission into the kingdom of God. "It is the evangelical experience of the saved soul," says Forsythe, "that is the real ground of Christological belief everywhere . . . The Deity of Christ cannot be proved either to the man on the street or the sage in the chair—but only to evangelical experience . . . Surely Christ who recreates me in that faith must be God."[7] By the same method of argument, *i. e.*, that the explanation produces the experience, the Buddhist might prove the deity of Gautama Buddha, or Mrs. Eddy the truth of her "no-matter but all-mind" metaphysics.

According to this reasoning, it is admitted that the deity of Christ and cognate dogmas cannot be proven to the human reason. They depend for their proof upon

[7] P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 9, 29, 94, 204.

the subjective experience of those who believe and also follow in Christ's Way of Life. When a man believes in the Trinity and at the same time loves his wife and family, to say that his conduct in the home proves the truth of his theology is assumption altogether and no proof at all. No more is the experience of him who seeks to live as Jesus taught a proof of the correctness of his opinions about Jesus.

The mystical experience of the inner life, when faith in God gives peace of heart, subdues selfish passions, and inspires love, is an emotional reaction which does not establish as true the intellectual beliefs of the man at the time of the experience. As Coe points out, "The Christian mystic feels that Christ or the Virgin Mary is present; a Mohammedan, never. Each mystical religionist brings back from his contemplation the sort of ideas he took into it."[8] Or, as James says, "The mystic acquires his religious convictions precisely as his non-mystical neighbor: namely, through tradition and instruction grown habitual, and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it."[9] Hence the fallacy of supposing that Christian experience proves the truth of the theological dogmas brought into the experience. The truth in regard to them must be learned, not by any experience associated with them, but by the use of reason in the light of all available knowledge. That which is spiritual must be spiritually discerned and that which is intellectual must be intellectually discerned.

The forces at work in nature and in all life go on producing their effects just the same whether men's theories about them be true or false. Primitive man ate food to renew his strength with the same faith in its qualities as the most modern physiologist or food faddist. But he had very crude notions about the digestion and

[8] George A. Coe: The Psychology of Religion, p. 273.
[9] William James: Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 364 ff.

assimilation of the food by the body. In spite of this he was fed and became strong. He and the modern physiologist would describe what happens in the body after a meal in terms so different that neither would understand the other, but to both Nature gave the same experience of satisfaction and nourishment. That experience of receiving sustenance does not depend upon the beliefs concerning how it is obtained from the food held by either, and neither could prove the errors of the other by an appeal to that experience. So also, when men enter upon certain spiritual experiences in following Christ's Way of Life, their explanations and theories to account for it may be crude or philosophical and yet the experience may be the same. The Unitarian and the Trinitarian, the ignorant and the wise, alike find spiritual life and sustenance because the power and love of God work out their ordained results in human nature with little regard to men's theories and explanations. That which is true about these explanations must be intellectually discerned by careful observation and rational argument.

Popular Christianity is characterized by a dogmatic confidence that its theological theories explain all that there is to be explained about the mystical experience of faith, love, and peace with God, by which the soul acquires and is maintained in spiritual health or holiness. It even makes the astounding claim that disbelief of its dogmas is evidence that this spiritual health is impossible to the disbeliever. Highly emotional methods, which confuse the mind, are resorted to in order to give fictitious support to this ill-supported claim. Fear is excited by warnings of a terrible judgment to come, perhaps made horrific by allusions to death and hell. Faith is induced by the assurance that all dangers may be escaped by trust in the merits of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross and his intercession in heaven. In proportion as the fear has been disturbing, there will

follow a psychological reaction compounded of relief, thankfulness, peace, and a sense of safety. The change from a state of agitation to a state of peace and thankfulness for release from danger is then taken to be a proof that both the cause of the fear was genuine and the means of its removal real. These feelings of fear and faith, excited and assuaged by every priestly religion in the world are, however, no evidence that the incitements to fear were well founded nor that the means offered as a way of escape from impending danger have any real value. It is possible to be terrified by one mythological fiction and to be pacified by another. The experience of belief in the reality of a peril and of a sense of deliverance from it is no evidence that either the peril or the deliverance had any real existence. Whether they have or have not a real existence is a subject for inquiry by enlightened intelligence. Unless reason be on its guard in religion, superstition alone may be the cause of both the fear and the faith.

The relations between fear and faith are worthy of more extended notice than is here possible. They produce their effects in equal degree whether their exciting cause be real or imaginary. This is a commonplace of mental therapeutics. In the sixteenth century Paracelsus said: "Imagination and faith can cause and remove disease. Confidence is the virtue of amulets is the whole secret of their efficacy. It is from imagination that faith draws its power. Anyone who believes in the secret resources of nature receives from nature according to his faith; let the object of your faith be real or imaginary, you will in an equal degree obtain the same results."

The esteemed founder of Christian Science rediscovered this principle by which the debilitating mental and physiological effects produced by fear may be dissipated. Though she obscured it in a fogbank of amateur metaphysics, she was successful in giving it wide vogue.

"Fevers," she said, "are errors of various types . . . The images held in the disturbed mind frighten conscious thought . . . Destroy fear and you end fever . . . To fear and admit the power of disease is to paralyze mental and scientific demonstration . . . So the sick through their beliefs have induced their own diseased conditions. . . . Opiates do not remove the pain in any scientific sense. They only render the mortal mind temporarily less fearful . . ." The process of healing is to show the sick "how mortal mind seems to induce disease by certain fears . . . To succeed in healing you must conquer your own fears as well as those of your patient." So all-embracing did the scope of these forms of fear and faith seem to her that her confidence in the reality of physical causation was destroyed. The mental phenomena alone are real; the material are illusory. So she says, "We must learn how this mortal mind governs the body, whether through faith in hygiene or in drugs or in will-power . . . Certain results supposed to proceed from drugs are really caused by faith in them, which false human consciousness has been educated to feel . . The chemist, the botanist, the doctor, the nurse, equip the medicine with their faith, and the beliefs that are in the majority rule."[10] This would appear to mean that if the faith of the majority of mankind on these matters could be changed, strychnine would not kill, nor whisky intoxicate nor bread nourish. Great is the power of fear and faith; the imagination of the mortal mind can both kill and cure. This fact, which is true within limits, should not, however, blind us to other facts equally true and lead us to suppose that all we need is to believe, in sufficient numbers, that a thing is true and it becomes true. But the natural swing of the pendulum from fear that hath torment, whether the exciting cause be real or imaginary, and the faith that casts that fear out, she offered as evidence that her metaphysics is revealed

[10]Mary B. Eddy: Science and Health.

truth. That many are afflicted with imaginary ills and unfounded fears is perfectly true, and also that their ills may be remedied by a mental readjustment. Her system which was based on this knowledge has done both good and harm. It is another instance of coining an explanation and then insisting that the explanation can produce the experience. As Shakespeare said,

> "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
> Which we ascribe to heaven."

There are, however, physical causes and forces, bacterial invasions and pus infections, poison gases and bullets, wildcats and snakes, against which faith in their unreality is a protection as frail as a straw hat against a machine gun.

A vast amount of religious and medical quackery secures its popularity by capitalizing unfairly for its own ends the swing of the pendulum from fear to faith in human life. The field of operations for such malpractice is as wide as the gullibility of the human race. "Any practice, religion, belief, or other system of healing, however false or foolish," says Dr. Sadler, "if it is able to destroy fear and give origin to faith, will prove itself able to cure disease and heal the sick in sufficient numbers to establish its claims as a new religion—perhaps the only genuine belief. So it would appear that any practice, procedure, belief, medicine, cult or ism, which is able to generate faith and destroy fear, possesses definite curative powers in the treatment of mental and physical disease. The fact that the sick and suffering recover under such treatment in no way proves that the religion or ethics or other ideas of those who treat them are right or wrong."[11]

"The first duty of the psychotherapist," says Dr. Weaver, "is to dispel the dark shadows and rid the patient of the toxic effects of fear and worry. He must be shown that his fears have no foundation; that they have a very injurious effect upon the bodily organism;

[11]Wm. S. Sadler: The Physiology of Faith and Fear, p. 105 ff.

that they are the result of extreme selfishness."[12] The manner of overcoming this condition is to establish a neutralizing faith that destroys the fear. "In every religion, therefore, where the fundamental reality upon which faith rests is believed in as all good and all powerful, it is natural there should issue from the same a healing by faith."[12] The point to be noted is that in such experience we witness the conflict of contrary beliefs, one of which produces fear and the other extinguishes the fear. One is called a fear-state, the other a faith-state. But in both cases the cause of the fear-state and the cause of the faith-state may be equally fictitious. That which is real and true cannot be determined by the subjective experience but by an intellectual process of investigation and reasoning that is not disturbed by the emotional condition.

If the effects produced upon the physical organism by fear and faith be so marked, we might expect to find others even more striking in the psychical organization. These effects within the soul or mind, as in the case of the body, would be wrought quite independent of the truth or falsity, the reality or unreality, of that which is feared or believed in. A mythological fiction like a hell of fire and brimstone, legends concerning the saints and the curative power of their relics, may excite fear, hope or faith, and determine conduct, but such effects ought not to be taken as evidences of their reality and truth. Neither the experience of conversion nor any other subjective change can be taken as authentic proof of the beliefs of one having such experiences, so all such beliefs must depend for their substantiation, not upon their effect on the believer but upon the same kind of evidence as would be used to support any scientific statement offered for belief. Unless they can stand the tests of rational investigation and scientific or historical verification they must be remanded to the scrap-heap of

[12]E. E. Weaver: Mind and Health, pp. 169, 162.

explanations and theories that are unproved. He who loves truth as he loves God is, therefore, not satisfied that genuine instances of physical healing or mental and moral change, however, numerous, arising from faith, can prove that the responsible cause is the intercession of the Virgin, the saying of Masses, the Deity of Jesus, the dogma of the Trinity, or the saving merits of atoning blood.

A faith which issues in genuine Christian experience and character may arise in association with a vast variety of intellectual opinions, explanations, theories, and beliefs. And that character is the enduring foundation, which remains the same even when the superimposed beliefs suffer change by increase of knowledge. Peter, John, and Paul could not have used the intellectual beliefs of the twentieth century to explain their religious experience, nor can a twentieth century Christian be expected to use their beliefs to explain his. Yet the unchanged standards of moral life and social conduct taught by Jesus in his parables and sermons, accepted and obeyed as the will of God, make it possible for men to-day to repeat the experiences of the Apostles in Christ's Way of Life, even without sharing all of their beliefs. The essence of the Pharisaism condemned by Christ was the arrogant confidence that the grace and favor of God are confined to those who are loyal to certain traditional beliefs and faithful in the performance of prescribed religious rites. Genuine Christian experience, therefore, we conclude to be perfectly consistent with changing standards of intellectual belief. We are led, thus, to say with Newman, "To sacrifice the understanding will never produce true religion but only fanaticism. Now the apostles and their contemporaries made no such sacrifice. They breathed the philosophy of their own century, and if we are to imitate their spirit, we shall abide in ours, and not engage the two parts of our nature in a fatal war."[13]

[13]Francis W. Newman: The Soul, p. 330.

Progressive Christianity firmly holds that any form of faith in God and Christ, which is consistent with the rest of the knowledge of the believer, that inspires obedience to the Christian principles of character and conduct, may properly be called a saving faith. Those principles have been found, from long racial experience and innumerable personal experiences, to be conducive to the happiness and welfare of men. And not the least of the virtues demanded by those principles as essential to human welfare is loyalty to all truth, as it may be learned from historical research, scientific observation, and rational inference from the facts. Faith becomes mere superstition as soon as the mind prefers the glamor or the gloom of fiction to the light of truth. "The ages of faith are not past," writes Ellwood, "for faith is of the very essence of normal human life. The ages of irrational faith, we may hope, are past or passing; but the age of rational and understanding faith is still ahead. We need the maximum of faith, not the minimum; but it must be a faith built on facts. To reach such a faith we cannot turn our backs on knowledge and science and revert again to mysticism. We must not fear intelligence . . . Our safety must consist in following it, in building up on the facts of life a reasonable faith."[14]

We may now inquire what is the nature of a reasonable faith. We know that the mainspring of conduct is faith, for action must be prompted by something which, rightly or wrongly, a man believes to be true or right. The faith concerning what the will of God really is and what method of life is ultimately the best is the most vital of all faiths. "Genuine faith," says Rufus Jones, "means the will to act as though we knew for the sake of an end we seek. To believe a truth is then to act as though it were known to be true."[15] Christian faith is the will to act as though the teachings of Christ in

[14]C. A. Ellwood: The Reconstruction of Religion, p. 31.
[15]Rufus Jones: Social Law in the Spiritual World, p. 217.

regard to the conduct of life, in principle and purpose, were known to be the will of God. Should experience ever prove any of them to be defective in detail or application, then reason and conscience will demand their amendment.

By faith Columbus sailed into seas unknown as though he knew every step of the way. No man sets out upon a venture without faith. Business would be paralyzed without credit, and credit is a venture based on faith. By faith Jesus chose a way of life and kept to it though it led him to the cross. By faith Paul sacrificed his worldly prospects to become an itinerant missionary. Whosoever chooses good and not evil shows his faith in the moral order. The root of all knowledge is faith, said Lotze, "which is the confidence of reason in itself."

Faith is, therefore, essential to achievement. Men falter when faith fails; they move onward when it revives. Without faith they lack courage and initiative; with it they attempt the impossible. When Lincoln would rally the American people to new exertions he said to them, "Let us have faith that right makes might and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty." That is the kind of faith the world needs.

"For man's well-being," said Carlyle, "faith is properly the one thing needful; how with it martyrs, otherwise weak, cheerfully endure shame and the cross; and without it, weaklings puke up their sick existence in the midst of luxury."

Men of faith do not sink into the lethargy of which Walt Whitman chanted:

> "I think I could turn and live with the animals, they are so placid and self-contained;
> I sometimes stand and look at them an hour at a stretch.
> They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
> They do not lie awake at night and weep for their sins,
> They do not make me sick discussing their duties to God;
> Not one is dissatisfied."

Happily men of faith are not content to be as stall-fed oxen. Above the sordid selfishness around shines a star of promise for them, and with faith they gird up their loins to follow it. Visions of what ought to be disturb their self-contentment. Ideals of goodness lure them forward. They dream of a world swept clean of wickedness, war, poverty, misery, and selfishness, and believing it to be the will of God, with the ardent faith of crusaders they begin to deny and discipline themselves and work that their vision may be realized. As Griggs says, "The impossible ideal of knowing all, of realizing perfect love, of seeing and creating the eternal beauty, of serving all who touch our lives, of absolute fidelity to our highest thought, this impossible ideal is the goal toward which we strive, and the higher and higher approximation to it alone gives worth and meaning to life."[16] To follow the ideal is the act of faith.

With the sublime audacity of faith Jesus made the very character of God the ideal goal to be finally attained by men. "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." In these words he expressed his faith in the potential greatness of man and branded self-complacency as blindness to the spiritual destiny of the children of God. Such faith contains in it the possibilities of all good.

"Over every aspect of human life," writes Jacks, "there hangs the prospect of a possible better, but without proof that we shall succeed, or even that it is worth while to make the attempt. The coward within us asks for proof; cries out the venture is not safe, and summoning the will to disbelieve has no difficulty in finding reasons to reject the invitation. . . . As the mere plaything of professional controversialists the fate of religion can never be decided. . . It depends upon the answer given by individual men and women to the question which faces them all over the gateway of life—

[16]E. H. Griggs: The New Humanism, p. 142.

Wilt thou be a hero or a coward?"[17] The hero is a man of faith, the coward a faithless man. Without faith it is impossible to please God or man. Both love the hero who stakes all upon his faith and is loyal to his Inner Light.

"Faith is a kind of climbing instinct, which draws us upward and onward," says Dean Inge. "It is not a passive acceptance of dogmas or of a scheme of salvation . . . Faith is an act of self-consecration, in which the will, the intellect, and the affections all have their place."[18] "Faith" says Leighton, "is the dynamic expression of the whole man. It springs from the need for action and endurance. It is the personal resolve and determination to take risks, to adventure forth on a hazardous quest; because it trusts in life, the universe, one's own powers. He who has faith is ready to wager thereon, willing to venture all. Faith is the dynamic urge of life itself. Its opposite is not skepticism but timidity and fear. Faith is loyalty to the highest values of life."[19]

This venturesome faith that Progressive Christianity commends to men will not pass unchallenged. The world offers much to discourage it. "No trials of religious faith," says Ladd, "can possibly exceed those which constantly come to a man who wills to believe in the supreme worth of personal good-will, in the final triumph of righteousness, and in the preferential values of the unselfish and self-sacrificing life."[20] The Christian man of faith is one

> "Who trusted God is love indeed
> And love creation's final law—
> Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravin shrieked against his creed."

[17] L. P. Jacks: Religious Perplexities, p. 32.
[18] W. R. Inge: Personal Religion, pp. 45, 48.
[19] Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Mind of Today, p. 219.
[20] George T. Ladd: The Philosophy of Religion, I, p. 497.

He is one who all his days will continue to venture the issues of his life upon this belief as if he knew it to be true. Through the venturesomeness of this kind of faith, inspired and sustained by Christ and the Christlike in every age, men are saved from the power of selfishness and delivered from the bondage of sin.

As Rauschenbusch has said, Christian faith "is not so much endorsement of ideas formulated in the past as expectancy and confidence in the coming salvation of God. It is faith to assume that this is a good world and that life is worth living. It is faith to accept the feasibility of a fairly righteous and fraternal social order. In the midst of despotic and predatory industrial life it is faith to stake our business future on the proposition that fairness, kindness, and fraternity will work. It is faith to see God at work in the world and to claim a share in His job. Faith is an energetic act of the will, affirming our fellowship with God and man, declaring our solidarity with the kingdom of God, and repudiating selfish isolation."[21]

Dr. Peabody puts it in this way: "Faith is not intellectual conformity, still less is it a renunciation of the intellectual life. It is the disciplined obedience of those who lead 'the life of the spirit.' 'We walk by faith,' said Paul. Faith, that is to say, is not a way of talking, but of walking . . . Theories of redemption change with the passing centuries. Christologies are elaborated or simplified as life grows more complex or learning more profound. Creeds may have to be reconstructed to express the genuine convictions of thoughtful minds. But the experience of the life of God in the soul of man, where grace meets faith and contact flashes forth into power—that is independent of circumstances and traditions."[22]

What God can do with, in, and for human nature is

[21] W. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 96, 103.
[22] F. G. Peabody: The Apostle Paul and the Modern World, p. 186.

one thing; what the mind of man can do to describe, explain, or account for the experience is something entirely different. The rich experience of a life inspired by the Christlike faith in God is not conditioned upon belief of any dogma about God or Christ; it is the response of life to the faith that God is love and "love creation's final law." What He is and what are his relations to the world of phenomena, including spiritual experience, must be left to the philosophical reason to determine—if it can. The more completely the life becomes dominated by the spirit of love within, the thinner becomes the wall which separates the consciousness of self from the consciousness of God. In that spirit the union of the human and the divine is completed, so that a great disciple expressed his belief that Christ could say, without sacrifice of his humanity, "I and my Father are one."

In the words of Gannett: "That in you which thinks, that in you which loves, that in you which makes the hard duty easy, that in a man which makes it a luxury to die that the right may live inviolate—that is the moral nature of things enstructured in you. To see this is to make the great discovery of God. Conceived in this way the Faith of Ethics makes God the intensely real. It mixes His very life with yours and mine."[23] Thus the faith that Progressive Christianity commends to men is that "Love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The will to live by such a faith is the greatest gift of God and the deepest need of men.

Through the faith which men may gain in these spiritual values in life as the will of God, they are sustained in their resolution to follow Christ in his Way of Life. In such a faith are the promise and potency of all righteousness. Progressive Christianity would say that

[23]W. C. Gannett: The Faith of Ethics.

a man with such a faith that works by love is received into the kingdom of God, not for what he is or has been, but for what he may become through his faith. Neither his belief in this or that doctrine, nor his theories about God or Christ, constitute the credentials of his divine sonship, but the Christlike faith that inspires him to seek and to do the will of God as that has been interpreted by Christ. This becomes the ground of his acceptance and forgiveness. "All of this will be more plain," said Robertson of Brighton, "if you consider what faith is. It is that strong, buoyant confidence in God and His love, which gives energy and spirit to do right without doubt or despondency. Where God sees that, He sees the spring and fountain out of which all good springs; He sees, in short, the very life of Christ begun, and reckons it for righteousness."[24]

"When, therefore," says Fosdick, "men set their hearts on Christ, lay hold of him by faith as life's Master and its goal, that faith opens the door to God's forgiveness. He is Christ's brother in the filial life with God, young, immature, undeveloped . . . God does not demand the end when only the beginning is possible, does not scorn the dawn because it is not noon . . . He takes the will for the deed, because the life is earnest; he sees the journey's end in Christlike character, when at the road's beginning the pilgrim takes the first step of faith. There is no fiction here; God ought to forgive and welcome such a man. All good parents act so toward their children. This divine grace corresponds with truth, for a man is worth the central, dominant faith, that determines life's direction and decides its goal. And the Gospel that God so deals with man, announced in the words of Jesus, illustrated in his life, sealed by his death, has been a boon to the race that puts men under an immeasurable debt to him."[25]

[24] F. W. Robertson: Life and Letters, p. 262.
[25] Harry E. Fosdick: The Meaning of Faith, p. 259.

Having this faith, the doctrines which a man accepts to express his intellectual interpretation of God and Christ, must then be those which best convince his intelligence of their truth, in the light of his knowledge and experience. That which alone is essential for the development of his spiritual life is the Christlike faith that will enable him to deny himself and take up his cross daily to follow Christ and all those who, through such faith and love, seek to be made morally perfect.

For these reasons it becomes possible to say with Stevens: "Faith in Christ is an eager desire to be like him; it is the choice of his ideals, a conviction of the truth and value of his type of life. It is the will to do God's will as Jesus reveals and interprets it. Justification is God's acceptance of the will for the deed. Salvation is by aspiration, that is by choice and preference for the good. God accepts and treats us, not according to what we are, but according to what we would like to be. The attainment of character and righteousnses is a never-ending process. Justification means that God accepts us as righteous when we have entered on the way of righteousness. Faith is no arbitrary condition of salvation; it is the only conceivable condition of attainment of Godlikeness. It is a choice, and aspiration, a yearning which opens the kingdom of heaven to men."[26]

We may also venture to say that this perception of the way to the highest human life has not been confined to those who possess the Christian traditions. As an interpreter of the philosophy of India a great Hindu scholar declares, "If we want to escape from sin, we must escape from selfishness. We should realize in our life and conduct that all things are in God and of God . . . Moral life is a God-centered life, a life of passionate love and enthusiasm for humanity, of seeking the infinite through the finite, and not a mere selfish

[26]George B. Stevens: The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, p. 458 ff.

adventure for small ends."[27] Who shall say that men having this faith need be excluded from the fellowship with Christ and those who follow him, because they lack the traditional Christian doctrines?

Stripped of dogmatic non-essentials, such is the conception of the value of faith which prevails among liberal Christians. Its exercise requires no sacrifice of reason nor of freedom of thought, but only the abandonment of selfishness, unkindness, and sin. These are to be abandoned because they are injurious to man and thus offensive to God. Faith sanctifies whatever is true and good in science and philosophy, in literature and art, and brings all the treasures of learning to the moral aid of man. All that earlier ages deemed supernatural may be brought within the realm of nature and be found subject to natural laws, and such a faith would still seek the highest spiritual life through obedience to the spirit of love within the heart. "And so," says Martineau, "the Spirit with his appeal brings his grace on one condition, namely an answering faith, a loving acceptance of the higher life for what it claims to be, and a free self-abandonment to it, whithersoever it may lead. Possessed of this pure trust, the disciple is drawn spontaneously into likeness to the object of his love; the lower self, shrouded in shame will die within him; and he will be invested with the righteousness of Christ."[28]

Theological Fundamentalists may fulminate against the menace of Progressive Christianity because it tolerates many forms of heresy, but what has a man, who has this "faith that works by love," to fear from God? He no longer fears to think for himself or to express his honest thought in terms of modern philosophy rather than in the terms of the ancient creeds. He can treat with indifference, if not with scorn, the ostracism and ban of sects, which would make conformity to their beliefs an essential of Christian faith and salvation.

[27] S. Radhakrishnan: The Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. 88.
[28] James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 532.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND REFORMATION

"A crisis confronts religion in the modern world. A New Reformation is necessary within the Christian Church, beside which the Protestant Reformation will seem insignificant."

CHARLES A. ELLWOOD.

Ian Maclaren truly says that in the early Church not liberty of thought but liberty of sinning alone was denied; and that the dynamic principles of its faith were these, "I believe in the Fatherhood of God; I believe in the words of Jesus; I believe in the clean heart; I believe in the service of love; I believe in the unworldly life; I believe in the Beatitudes; I promise to trust God and follow Christ, to forgive my enemies and to seek after the righteousness of God."[1] The Church was then a society of men and women devoted to spiritual ideals and social brotherhood in the midst of a materialistic and contentious world.

These simple, though profound, principles of Christian faith and life were soon thrust into the background by the influence of Greek intellectualism and Roman imperialism. The hope of a morally renovated world was kept alive by apocalyptic visions of supernatural interventions in the near future through the return of Christ from heaven to destroy the old world-order; and attention concentrated itself upon the task of saving an elect few from the wreck by ecclesiastical rites, laws, and dogmas. By this means the heavenly kingdom to come would be provided with a prepared people. The Church organized itself under the authority of its bishops, with power finally centralized in the Bishop of Rome, as Head of the Church, to be the theocratic empire of the expected

[1] Ian Maclaren: The Mind of the Master, p. 21.

Christ. The solidarity of the institution was secured upon the Roman principle of obedience to a hierarchy of power and not by the vital principle of spiritual life and love. Slowly the Church forged heavier fetters to bind the people in a bondage to its own traditions, and the spirit of truth was alleged to be found only in those who were faithful to those traditions. Thereafter the heralds of emancipation and scientific progress were crushed as heretics, and liberty to sin was more readily granted than liberty to think. This system was challenged and shattered by the Protestant Reformation but only partially reformed. At the present time a large section of the Church appears to fear and resent the Protestant principle of private judgment by finding a menace in every form of modernism.

The heralds of Progressive Christianity long prophesied to the deaf. Nearly a century ago, Channing declared, "A purer and higher form of Christianity is needed, such as will approve itself to men of profound thinking and feeling, as the real spring and most efficacious instrument of moral elevation, moral power, and disinterested love."[2] More than fifty years ago, Mazzini wrote, "Faith is perishing among the peoples, because the dogma that inspired it no longer corresponds to the stage of education which they have reached."[3] A generation ago Tolstoi asked, "What will happen if the people of Christendom cease to believe in Church doctrine? People will grow up with unperverted understandings and feelings. Having discarded a teaching accepted credulously, people will order their relations to God reasonably, in conformity with their knowledge, and will recognize the moral obligations flowing from that relation."[4]

Somewhat more recently a profound philosopher wrote: "Thus, after the searching changes of the last few

[2]W. H. Channing: Life of William Ellery Channing, p. 431.
[3]Joseph Mazzini: From the Council to God.
[4]Leo Tolstoi: An Appeal to the Clergy.

centuries, the world of Christian thought stands in need of a thorough reformation. What the age must win for itself is an essentially new form of Christianity, answering to that phase of the Spiritual Life to which the world's historical development has led us."[5] The position of Brewster rapidly gains new converts, "The Protestant Reformation proved only a false dawn, and the whole job has to be done over again from the bottom. The only question now is, whether the second reformation, unpleasant as undoubtedly it will be, shall be got through with now, or wait until by and by—when it may be too late."[6] Many of the best Christian thinkers agree with Leighton in saying, "We are now in the midst of a new Renaissance of the human spirit. It must be accompanied by a new Reformation."[7]

One thing now appears certain, and that is, that the Church of the Second Reformation, in the words of Holmes, "will fling away what Emerson calls 'the hoarded treasures of old rubbish,' with which her sanctuary is now encumbered, and put in their place the newest treasures that the world of modern learning has to offer. The new religion will receive and embody in herself all that modern science, modern history, modern philosophy have to teach. . . . Not only will the new religion accept the truth as it is given, and open her gates to the seeker of truth, but she will teach the world that no religious life is perfect without the love of truth. She will teach that it is the duty of every man, who yearns to unite his soul with the divine spirit, to meet every problem of thought and life with the open mind. She will instruct her members not to ask, as questions arise, what does the church teach? what does the creed affirm? what did the fathers think?—but only to ask what is the truth? She will lay upon her ministers and laymen alike the obligation, not to defend the tradition, support

[5]Rudolf Eucken: Christianity and the New Idealism, pp. 85, 161.
[6]E. T. Brewster: An Understanding of Religion, p. 129.
[7]Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Modern Mind, p. vi.

the dogma, or stand by the faith, but the solemn and sacred obligation to defend and support and stand by the truth, as, God helping them, they find the truth."[8] The Church of this Reformation must be a teaching institution, as free as any university, pledged not to the defense of ancient traditions but to the discovery and proclamation of every truth that affects the moral and social welfare of mankind. Its members will not be required to leave their brains in pawn when they enter its portals.

This movement has an historical justification. As Harnack says, "Luther introduced no finality but only made a partial beginning of a reformation, even according to his own principles."[9] That which he started soon slowed up and became arrested. The present task is to carry to completion the movement commenced in the sixteenth century. Let us see what the heretics and scholars of this second reformation propose.

By the labor of centuries the Christian Church built up three barriers before the Kingdom of God and decreed that they must all be passed by men in order to be saved from sin and death and hell.

The first was the Sacramental Barrier. Men must receive the saving grace of God through the holy sacraments, administered by the priesthood.

The second was the Theological Barrier. Men must believe the true faith, guaranteed by the infallible authority of the Church and the Bible.

The third was the Moral Barrier. Men must truly repent of sin and order their lives according to the teaching and example of Christ.

The first and second were fortified with powerful weapons of discipline and coercion, the third was left to the care of God and the saints.

We examine the first or Sacramental Barrier. "To

[8]John H. Holmes: Religion for Today, pp. 48 ff.
[9]Adolf Harnack: History of Dogma, p. 559.

the carnal eye," says Cardinal Gibbons, "the priest looks like other men, but to the eye of faith he is exalted above the angels . . . He is truly a dispenser of divine mysteries, who distributes to the faithful the sacraments, the mysterious symbols and efficacious causes of grace." Baptism by the priest "makes us heirs of heaven." In the Mass, pardon is procured for the faithful. "On the cross Christ purchased our ransom and in the Eucharistic sacrifice that ransom is applied to our souls."[10] "Whoever is not baptized," says the great Bellarmine, "or at least does not desire baptism, is not saved, though the lack results from ignorance or impotence." "Infants dying unbaptized are excluded from the kingdom of heaven," says the Catholic dictionary of Addis and Arnold.[11]

"It was the universal conception of medieval piety," says Lindsay, "that the mediation of the priest was essential to salvation. Medieval Christianity believed with more or less distinctness that the supernatural life of the soul was created, nourished and perfected through the sacraments . . . It was this universally accepted power of the mediatorial priesthood which had enslaved Europe, and which rendered the liberty of the Christian man an impossible thing. Everywhere the priesthood was supposed to bar the way to God."[12]

The Protestant Reformation was a frontal attack upon this Sacramental Barrier of the priesthood. This made it precisely what many good Protestants now accuse Liberal Christianity of being, namely, a destructive movement accompanied by negations and denials of precious traditions and of the revered religion of the fathers. By the fundamentalists of the time, it was regarded as an apostasy from the Christian faith and a menace to the souls of men.

[10]Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, pp. 441, 316, 355.
[11]Henry C. Sheldon: Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century, p. 231.
[12]T. M. Lindsay: History of the Reformation, p. 438. E. Maslin Hulme: Renaissance and Reformation, p. 227.

Interest and conviction combined to arouse and arm the giant strength of the Church against the heretics. They were opposed with uncompromising rigor and hundreds of thousands perished miserably in the persecutions which followed. The priests were resolved that their Sacramental Barrier and their accustomed tolls should not be abolished.

The Protestant Reformation concentrated its assault upon this barrier, but the Theological Barrier came through the conflict almost unscathed. Indeed, its condition, due to neglect, called for repairs but not for abolition. As the sacraments lost their unique value, the dogmas of religion acquired a new importance. The ancient creeds became even more prominent as an authoritative interpretation of the truths necessary to be believed, if one would be saved. "Catholicism," says Cross, "regards its doctrines as legal requirements, as preconditions of receiving the Church's benefits; Protestantism regards its doctrines as the very life of the soul, as the knowledge of the way of God to the heart of man and the way of man to the heart of God . . . The doctrines, which Protestantism inherited from the Catholic Church, take on a new vigor. For example, the Protestant orthodox creeds accept and renew allegiance to the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ . . . The old doctrines live again, though in a different sense from that which they had in the earlier times."[13] It was no longer the priests but the theologians who barred the way to God. The beginning of the second Reformation came in the subsequent revolt against the damnatory implications and clauses of the creeds.

The general effects for which these two barriers, erected to exclude from the hope of salvation all who do not pass through them, was responsible, is described by Lecky: "Whenever the doctrine of exclusive salvation

[13] George Cross: What is Christianity? p. 110.

is generally believed and realized, habits of thought will be formed around it that are diametrically opposed to the spirit of inquiry and absolutely incompatible with human progress. An indifference to truth, a spirit of blind and at the same time wilful credulity will be encouraged, which will multiply fictions of every kind, will associate inquiry with ideas of danger and guilt, will make men esteem impartiality of judgment and study, which is the very soul of truth, an unholy thing, and will so emasculate the faculties as to produce a general torpor on every subject."[14]

The Second Reformation would abolish the Theological Barrier, as an entrance to the kingdom of God, just as the earlier Reformation abolished the Sacramental Barrier. It condemns it as an obsolete structure and an obstacle to Christian faith, intellectual liberty, and social progress. Like the Great Wall of China it has outlived its usefulness. In this offensive the new Protestants are actuated by this conviction—they believe that nothing can keep men out of the kingdom of God but the Moral Barrier and that this may be passed, with or without first passing the other two barriers erected by the Church, by all having a Christlike faith which will move them to penitence for sin and inspire them to sacrifice passion for principle, selfishness for love, malice for good will, and personal gain for the common good. As the earlier Protestants found that the genuine Christian experience was possible without priestly intercession and sacraments, so the Protestants of the Second Reformation find it equally possible without the dogmas of the creeds. Both the priests and scribes of religion, it has become plain, may be ignored without spiritual loss. This religious movement seeks a kind of piety which, as Kirsopp Lake says, "will satisfy the soul of

[14] W. E. H. Lecky: History of Rationalism in Europe, chap. on Persecution; also Tolstoi's essay on What is Religion? and Andrew White's A History of the Warfare between Science and Theology, 2 vols.

a saint without disgusting the intellect of a scholar." It found its Renaissance in the scientific and historical discoveries of the nineteenth century and in the revolutionary principles of intellectual liberty, social justice and human brotherhood, which have marked the rise of modern democracies.

Against this Second Reformation the Fundamentalist reactionaries seek to mass the forces of conscientious objectors, theological loyalists and religious illiterates. The danger of this defensive counter-movement was pointed out by Dean Mathews: "When a doctrine carries over into the religious thought of one age the outgrown social morality or scientific knowledge of a past age, and makes such anachronism essential to itself, a theology is not Christian in the truest sense of the word . . . In the age-long struggle between a religion dominated by ecclesiastical authority and the religion of Christ, the present struggle is only one phase. Today, however, as probably never before, the attempt to maintain as unchanged and final authority even those formulae which expressed the profoundest hopes, faith and moral ideals of earlier ages is producing widespread fatal results. The attempt to impose a theology, which makes the test of Christian life, not the moral passion and sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, but conformity to itself, is rapidly making certain branches of the Christian Church enemies of modern culture."[15] The success of this reaction, says Glenn Frank, "would mean the conversion of the Church into a Hall of Dead Doctrines presided over by Pious Ignorance."[16] The Christian Church must face the situation stated by Kent: "Religious dogmas long regarded as the corner stones of religion and of the Church are being disproved or supplanted by the discoveries of modern science. All theologies suddenly seem out of date . . . For a growing majority of men today, the lan-

[15]Shailer Mathews: Art. in the Christian Century, Dec. 1, 1921.
[16]Glenn Frank: Address on The New Reformation.

guage of theology is either obsolete or objectionable."[17]

Men are learning to believe that without danger of offending Deity, they may strike one sin from the traditional code of the churches—the sin of doctrinal unbelief. The Protestant Reformation released men from the priests and delivered them over to the theologians. It said, for example, "If one questions the divinity of Christ, he should be put to death without a hearing." The historian remarks, "Intolerance of the most cruel kind, naked and unashamed, is revealed again and again in Calvin's correspondence." Luther said, "He that does not believe my doctrine is sure to be damned."[18] This conclusion is not now quite so popular as then, but many appear to think that if it be not true, it ought to be. All life was darkened and demoralized by the fear of punishment here and hereafter for disagreement with a theological system. "The world was not interested in liberalism and tolerance," says Taylor. "He who followed the Roman way would be damned as surely, according to Lutheran conviction, as in Catholic eyes men would be damned for following Luther. It did not irk Luther and his followers, any more than it did Calvinists and Catholics, or Mohammedans for that matter, to think of many damned."[19]

Delivered from this reign of terror, the Second Reformation would carry forward the evolution of religion by raising the standard of intellectual integrity among all Christians as high as that which prevails among scientists. A church which fears doubt of its dogmas or the skepticism of honest minds, is like a witness who resents the examination of his testimony and desires the corroboration of his statements more than the discovery of the truth. "The only question which any wise man can ask himself," said Huxley, "and which any honest man will ask himself, is whether a doctrine is true or

[17]Charles Foster Kent: The Fundamentals of Christianity, pp. 19, 30.
[18]E. Maslin Hulme: Renaissance and Reformation, p. 363.
[19]Henry Osborne Taylor: Thought and Expression in the 16th Century, I, p. 247.

false." The liberal Christian agrees with the scientist and says with Channing: "In proportion as a man suppresses his convictions to save his orthodoxy from suspicion or distorts language from its common use that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the integrity of his character. . . Wait not to be backed by numbers. Wait not till you are sure of an echo from a crowd. The fewer the voices on the side of truth, the more distinct and strong should be your own."

With the reaction against the dogmatic intolerance of the past has come to many a feeling of indifference and a sort of color-blindness on all doctrinal subjects. They say, "It makes no difference what we believe or permit our children to be taught." A slogan and a crowd, without any definite thought and positive convictions, are thought to be sufficient for a church. A benevolent amiability, which shuns controversy and seeks peace at any price, or which esteems the approval of relatives and friends more highly than loyalty to new visions of truth, paralyzes intellectual effort and sincerity. One belief is regarded as good as any other, so long as the pews are filled. As well might one say that since demonology is an exploded superstition, it makes no difference what people believe as to the cause and cure of disease. The errors of the past are no excuse for intellectual flaccidity in the present. To think straight was never more important than it now is. Indifference to discovered error is betrayal of truth.

"Truth has failed, will fail again,
If not backed by truthful men.
Who lets falsehood known go by,
Propagates himself the lie."

Liberalism is not indifferentism. It is absence of dogmatism and intolerance. It relies on the self-verifying power of truth and has perfect faith in the reasonable-

ness and goodness of God. It cleans the windows of the soul from prejudice, superstition, and fear to let in the light, and it respects the sincere convictions of others as it desires its own to be respected. Having this spirit, theology may become a progressive branch of philosophy and cease to be a collection of fossils of extinct thought.

"If the Church is to save the world," writes Bishop Parsons, "it must stake the future on the power of Love. It must proclaim the Gospel of Love. It must also have faith enough to practice it."[20] As a first principle, that is true, but there is a second like unto it. The Church must stake its future on the power of Truth; it must also have faith enough to follow it. Religion based on what is alleged to be true, upon the dubious authority of a former generation, will influence a scientific age only in proportion to the ignorance of the people.

Prompted no doubt by the best of good intentions, the same divine goes on to say that Fundamentalist and Modernist should love one another enough to unite in repeating the same creed. If the Modernist "believes that he has seen the truth a little more clearly, while sharing with him (the Fundamentalist) the big, deep experience of love to Christ, disloyalty or dishonesty would lie in his deserting the Church, not in his staying in it. So the Modernist today, attacked as dishonest because he uses a creed, in which there are many phrases which to him have only a spiritual, not a literal value, answers that he needs no defence."[20] Does this mean, for example, that for the sake of staying in the same church with his Fundamentalist brother, that one should go on saying that he believes that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary without a human father; that he was both Very Man and Very God; that his body was raised from the tomb; and that his crucifixion was a sacrifice of blood to make it possible for God to forgive sin, though he actually disbelieves these statements and

[20] E. L. Parsons: Art. in the Outlook, Apr. 2, 1924.

believes something quite different? In assenting to such statements, the one may say them readily enough because he believes just what the words say, but the other must repeat them from veneration of the past though he does not believe what the words say. And if he refuses to be a party to such a trifling with his own convictions and leaves a church rather than compromise himself in such a way, it is claimed that he and not the Church is the offender, and he becomes guilty of "disloyalty and dishonesty." Truly the way of the Modernist is hard. Any Church that demands sacrifice of intellectual integrity to preserve a form of words, which may be interpreted to mean both what they say and do not say, deserves to be forsaken. Denominational loyalty is a beggarly excuse for disloyalty to one's own convictions and the right to express them plainly.

When Stopford Brooke came under the influence of Martineau, he felt it to be his duty to resign a splendid position in the Church of England to join the Unitarians. Dean Stanley advised him not to do so, saying, "The Church is broadening to meet your position." He replied, "Will it broaden sufficiently to admit James Martineau being Archbishop of Canterbury?" "Not in our day," answered Stanley. "Then I leave the Church of England," was Brooke's reply. Was he disloyal and dishonest? He made a painful sacrifice to keep faith with his conscience and his great Christian life is sufficient answer to the question.[21]

To retain membership in a church, when its published creed, in which the conditions of eternal salvation are dogmatically affirmed to be revealed, is believed to be untrue in its statements of fact and doctrine, for any personal profit, is not a course of conduct any church could publicly commend. To do so for the sake of the institution itself is to sacrifice manhood to machinery, truth to tradition, and the spirit of Christ to the spirit

[21] L. P. Jacks: Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke, p. 324, note.

of conformity. It is this sacrifice which is forced on men by the Theological Barrier, that the Second Reformation would end.

"If then," says a distinguished clergyman, "the Modernist be asked why, if he does not believe the fact he does not plainly say that he does not believe it, his answer may be that he has a deep sense of responsibility. He knows that, however much emphasis be laid upon private judgment, there is to be found in every congregation a considerable number of people who are trusting in the authority of the teacher and taking their opinions from him. If then, he were to say that he does not believe the Virgin Birth to be a historic fact, he might easily shatter the faith of those who are trusting the Divine Saviour. One would think that this would meet the approval of serious-minded men, instead of being a reproach."[22]

No one would dispraise the delicacy of sentiment that would refrain from disturbing the sacred faith of another by rude or offensive bluntness. Such sweetness of spirit is to be expected of a gentleman. But this "deep sense of responsibility" that would lead one to avoid giving needless offense to others must stop short of downright evasion and ambiguity. "The authority of the teacher" ceases to carry any weight when he ceases to be a voice and becomes an echo. Both Jesus and Paul, in a parallel situation, were forced by their sense of responsibility to a course of conduct extremely painful to their families and friends. Jesus said to the timid, who feared to break with family traditions, "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." He required his disciples to choose between the traditions they had received and the new truth revealed to them. Every Christian missionary to foreign lands goes from a sense of responsibility to displace, if he can, traditions and beliefs as venerable and sacred to the people who hold

[22]Leighton Parks: What is Modernism? pp. 103–119.

them as are any of the doctrines of the creed to their Christian devotees. It is the law of progress that truth and error must meet in open conflict. It is not the duty of a Christian to carry his consideration of the feelings of others to the point that he will pretend to believe as they do and spare their errors because they have become precious to them. Many attempts were made to disarm the Protestant Reformation with the same injunction to amiable compromise. It was said that it would be dangerous to disturb the faith of the multitudes who trusted in the divine power of the priestly sacraments. When Criticism disclosed the fallibility of the Bible and revealed the human errancy of its writers, there was an instant demand to hush it up lest the faith of the people in the Word of God be shaken. "Safety first" has too often been the motto of a timid Church, which feared to face the truth.

Wise are the words of John Morley: "The fact that the mass are not yet ready to receive, any more than to find, is no reason why the possessor of new truth should run to hide under a bushel the candle which has been lighted for him. If the time has not come for them, it has come for him. No man can know whether his neighbors are ready for change or not."[23]

The sincere respect we owe to the opinions of others is not to be shown by adopting their language to express our different beliefs, but in refraining from any demand that they must adopt our language to express theirs. The Second Reformation seeks for the minds of all men an atmosphere of liberty and light. And as Channing said, "If they who wear the chains of creeds once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom, and of moving with unencumbered spirit, no wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty."[24]

[23]John Morley: Compromise, p. 218.
[24]William Ellery Channing: On Creeds.

Reinhold Niebuhr marks a weakness of Liberal Christianity, when he says that liberalism has been "captivated by the theological simplicity rather than by the moral splendor of the Gospel." It is a pretty general weakness of human nature to be more interested in thinking and dreaming about religion than in putting into practice the precepts of Christ. And this weakness is not confined to liberals. Most men would rather fight around the Theological Barrier over matters of opinion than unite under the leadership of Christ to draw a community through the Moral Barrier into the kingdom of righteousness, love, and peace.

Liberal movements in opposition to the dogmas of both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, in their earlier stages, were justified and supported by an appeal to the Bible. They rested their case upon the correctness of their interpretation of Scripture. All parties agreed that the Bible was the standard by which every religious doctrine should be tested. The Unitarian martyrs of the Reformation period died in testimony to the truth that the dogmas of the creeds were not deducible from a rational and scholarly interpretation of the Bible. "Socinianism," says Reville, "invented a method of biblical exegesis intended to reconcile reason with faith in the written revelation. It assumed the necessity of submitting to Scripture, but the real meaning of each passage is what reason determines."[25] But as scholarly study proceeded it revealed in the Bible the presence of contradictions and absurdities, myths and legends, antiquated opinions and speculations of obviously human origin, which shook faith in its infallible authority. Men came to the conclusion that even a statement of Scripture might sometimes be doubted. Historical criticism brought to light the truth concerning the Bible and its contents, while the developing sciences found their discoveries to be in conflict with the scientific ideas of

[25]Albert Reville: History of the Dogma of the Deity of Christ, p. 220.

Bible writers. Hence the Second Reformation became inevitable for the purpose of deposing the Bible from its position as final and infallible authority and of installing in its place the revelations of God to be found in the continuous discovery of truth down to the present hour. The maxim of the earlier liberals was, "Life, not belief of dogmas nor reception of sacraments makes the Christian"; that of modern liberals is, "Life, not belief of sacred texts, makes the Christian."

Protestant orthodoxy rests upon the principle of the infallible authority of the Bible; Progressive Christianity upon the authority of Truth, discoverable by research and from experience, by a rational process. "He who hides beneath mysteries and contradictions the religion that he preaches to me," said Rousseau, "teaches me at the same time to distrust that religion. The God whom I adore is not the God of darkness, he has not given me understanding to forbid me to use it; to tell me to submit my reason is to insult the Giver of reason. The minister of truth does not tyrannize over my reason, he enlightens it . . . yet if I use my reason, if I cultivate it, if I employ rightly the innate faculties which God bestows upon me, I shall learn by myself to know and love him, to love his works, to will what he wills, and to fulfill my duties upon the earth, that I may do his pleasure."[26]

This is not a destructive but a constructive attitude. It denies only to affirm. In religion and ethics as in science, all that has been learned in the past remains for our instruction, but because the discovery of truth was not then completed, that which in our father's time was best may no longer be the best. Increased knowledge and altered social conditions render many traditions and customs obsolete, and to perpetuate them, whether from prejudice, fear or superstition or hostility to change, becomes disloyalty to the best interests of

[26]Jean Jacques Rousseau: Emile, Everyman's Library, pp. 264, 271.

mankind. "And we have not simply to take but always to choose," says Martineau. "And the tests by which we distinguish the fictitious from the real, the wrong from the right, the unlovely from the beautiful, the profane from the sacred, are to be found within, and not without, in the methods of just thought, the instincts of pure conscience, and the aspirations of unclouded reason. These are the living powers which constitute our affinity with God, and render what to Him is eternally true and good, true and good to us as well."[27]

The Protestant Reformation, however, was not simply a movement to supplant a sacramental by a theological religion. It was the beginning of a revolt against the entire priestly conception of piety in favor of an effort to realize the prophetic ideals. This was the source of its greatest power. That it was thwarted by compromises, which left the churches entangled in the old dogmatic system but indicates the need now of carrying its principles to their logical conclusions. It was essentially the outcome of social unrest and a demand for social justice and more righteous social conditions. To complete what it began, the Second Reformation must not only lead men from theological bondage to intellectual liberty; it must organize a new alignment of forces in the interest of social betterment and fraternal coöperation.

In the sixteenth century, says the historian, "The condition of Europe was one of seething discontent and full of bitter class hatreds—the trading companies and great capitalists against the guilds, the poorer classes against the wealthier, the nobles against the towns." The galling harness of feudal tyranny irritated all classes. Everyone had an overlord who oppressed him, while over all extended the Papal Empire, exploiting prince and peasant alike, and rewarding its obedient vassals with dubious passports to heaven. "The prime cause of

[27] James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 326.

the Reformation was the smouldering anger of the Northern nations at their financial exploitation by the Italian Papacy. At the Deity of Worms in 1521, nearly all the German princes were friendly with Luther, but they cared nothing about his doctrinal differences and would have been best pleased if he had abjured them."

Similar social conditions had long before called forth the denunciations of the Hebrew prophets. As Kent relates: "Thus through bribery and unjust decisions the common people were reduced still further to a condition of servitude . . . in their new mad zeal to build palaces and to indulge in the prevailing forms of luxury, the rulers neglected more and more the demands of ordinary justice and mercy. As long as the rulers brought rich sacrifices to the sanctuaries and faithfully met the demands of the ritual, they were confident of Jehovah's favor and protection and were blind to the glaring contrast between their public professions and their private acts. The very offerings which they brought to Jehovah were wrested from their dependent fellow-countrymen by injustice and oppression . . ."[28] In the face of fierce opposition from princes and priests, the prophets thundered against the social iniquities of their times and demanded moral reformation. The Christian modernist takes up the same theme, believing that human happiness and welfare depend supremely upon passing the Moral Barrier into the kingdom of God.

The Christian conception of how this must be accomplished, however, differs widely from that of the Hebrews. According to Jewish piety the change was to be accomplished under the leadership of an anointed King, whom God would raise up; according to medieval piety this hope depended for realization upon the reign of a Papal Vicar of that King, of whom all nations and kings should be the obedient vassals. Neither mes-

[28]Charles F. Kent: Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 57.

sianic nor papal authority is competent. The Second Reformation is frankly democratic, not autocratic, in its principles. The Reign of God must be established over the earth, not by royal or papal power, but by the franchise of free peoples deliberately choosing the way of personal and social obedience to the will of God as interpreted by Christ and the prophets.

It is this change of political ideals which makes much of the Old Testament archaic, for they are shaped in a monarchical mould. Had not Jehovah said unto David, "Thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever; thy throne shall be established forever"? Had not David repeated this promise to Solomon, who reminded Jehovah of it in the dedication of his temple? Had not Jehovah ratified the promise, saying, "then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom over Israel forever"? Had not a great prophet said that Jehovah shall "cause a Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of Israel"? So the expectation grew and flourished that through the inauguration of a political theocracy, under a great son of David, the golden age of righteousness and peace should be established on the earth. It was a noble vision—the dream of a world saved from poverty, injustice, crime, war, misery, and sin, through the power of a benevolent despot, God's anointed Messiah. The world should then be coerced into obedience to legislation from above. Not a government of the people, for the people, and by the people, but the government of a divinely guided Autocrat was the hope of Israel. Such a hope remains among pessimists who despair of human ability and sigh for a Potentate from Heaven to manage the world and govern it. Such a monarch, fulfilling the hopes of Israel, as we have seen, Jesus refused to be.

A divine Caesar might conceivably settle the disputes of nations better than a League of Nations or an Inter-

national Court of Justice. He might enact better laws than the average parliament or congress. He might place Gabriel in the White House; enthrone Raphael at Berlin; send Uriel to dissolve the House of Commons, and govern the world from Jerusalem or Rome. He might distribute cohorts of angelic police among the nations to disarm the recalcitrant, ensure economy, impose equitable taxation, disburse public funds honestly, drive out jingoes and grafters, and guarantee a full dinner pail for every worker. But it requires no great prescience to foresee that all peoples would soon be conspiring for the return of the good old times when they governed themselves, even if they did it badly. Men would rather die in the trenches for the right of self-government than fatten in peaceful pastures policed by heaven. The silence of the Supreme Ruler in the presence of earthly troubles brought on the nations by their bad government is eloquent testimony to His respect for human autonomy. Men must learn to rule themselves individually and socially, suffering the consequences of their own ignorance and follies until they learn wisdom. The resources of the universe are placed at their disposal, with some liberty of self-direction, until by experience they shall learn obedience to principles by which alone they may expect the ideal conditions dreamed of by the great prophets.

This lesson of history is frankly recognized and accepted in the Second Reformation. Social maladjustments must be studied and corrected by men themselves, serving as God's sons. Exploitation, injustice, poverty, war, sin, and suffering, must all be overcome by the free affiliation of men with the Creative Power, whose laws are revealed in nature and in life. To discover and lead men into obedience to the laws governing the physical world is the service of the scientific; to discover and lead men into obedience to the laws that govern the spiritual world of the human mind and heart is the service of the

religious. Every theology, religion, or social program that does not induce men to render obedience to the spiritual laws of life, will only issue, as Frank B. Vrooman points out, "in a political and economic philosophy, founded on an ethics that justifies a man's selfishness to himself."[29] "The desired goal," writes Roger Babson, "is to recreate men and women to be actuated by the spirit of Jesus. Any methods of work which do not accomplish this fundamental need are failures. . . The hearts of men must be filled full of love and goodness. Only then will be forced out all the sordidness, selfishness, greed and unrighteousness that are now there. Then will all men understand each other as brothers. Then will labor problems, sex problems, race problems, group problems, international problems fade away, because men's hearts will be right with their fellows and with God."[30]

Every human Utopia fails because men balk at the Moral Barrier that stands at the entrance to the Kingdom of God. They search for ways to get around it. They are willing to postpone the heaven they seek until a future life, if priests or theologians can find a way to smuggle them into it without too great moral effort. They are willing to bequeath to their children the hope that the Pope or the Coming Christ may sometime make the way easier than now, and in some supernatural manner bring peace and good will among men, and thus do away with the personal sacrifices demanded by the stern prophets of the Moral Order. They shirk the responsibility of disarming their hearts of hatred and greed, of practicing justice and good will in daily life, of making good laws and obeying them, of training their children in habits of right living, of educating themselves to rejoice in the truth and of serving God and not Mammon.

[29]Frank B. Vrooman: The New Politics, p. 115.
[30]Roger Babson: New Tasks for Old Churches, pp. 188, 189.

Progressive Christianity would bring men face to face with these grim realities of life and show them that there is no escape by sacramental means or theological sophistry from the reign of law. The social environment of men has changed since the days of the prophets and of Luther, but the same selfishness rides in the limousine that rode in the ancient chariot or dwelt in the feudal castle. We still have overlords, serfs, and vassals. Nationalism and class warfare are a continuation of the old tribal conflicts. The economic struggle is both domestic and international. It rocks civilization to its foundations and is pregnant with bigger and better wars. It burdens the nations with armaments and taxation and terrifies them with fear of cataclysms yet to come. Discontent is universal. The age of machinery has but multiplied the opportunities of men to exploit each other and the objects which excite their covetousness. Men are no longer interested in debating how God proposes to propitiate His wrath and justify Himself for not sending them to hell forever. They are interested in learning how He proposes to save them from the present debacle on earth. The Protestant Reformation looked to theology for guidance on how to get the world into heaven; the Second Reformation looks to Christ and the social sciences for guidance on how to get heaven into the world.

While educated men ignore their moral and religious duties and the masses drivel away their lives in the pursuit of vulgar pleasures; while amusement and not service is made the chief end of existence; while money is loved more than honor, justice or truth; while nations measure their greatness by the gold in their banks and the weight of their artillery; while governments spend more on preparations for war than on education and research; while churches judge the truth of their doctrines by the size of their congregations; while sin is condoned if it bring success; while animalism and

selfishness remain the controlling motives of conduct—the world will suffer from self-inflicted wounds and smother in its own poison gases.

Christianity has not failed; it has not been adequately tried. Except in small numbers men have rejected the organization of personal and social life demanded by the principles of Christ. They have been more eager to find a post mortem salvation at the barrier of the priests and theologians than to pass through the moral barrier of the prophets. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." But that is precisely what the majority object to doing.

Nevertheless, some progress has been made. Men have come to think that at any rate it would be a good thing for their neighbors to be Christians. It would add to their security and make the collection of their accounts easier. They may even be prepared to go a step farther and try out some of its principles themselves in a limited manner. They obey the spirit of unselfish love in their own homes, and find that it works well. Many a man is quite a good Christian at home, but a wolf on Wall Street. Such men, almost persuaded to be Christians, even form clubs, unions, brotherhoods, and societies, and vow that they will love those within their chosen group. They find that this also works well. But their Christian practice is not strong enough to travel far, and they fail to cross the frontiers when they come to them that divide them from other groups. They are at best tribal Christians. So the race is split into fragments, group warring against group. National jealousies, racial hatreds, group interests, economic rivalries, and class prejudices, drive them into such a melee that there is no peace under the sun. Along all social and geographical boundaries are pitched the camps of competitive groups at war, while the same men at the same time are learning the value of mutual service, justice, love and

brotherhood within their groups. The Christian ideal aims to make universal between all groups, as between the members within a group, the practice of justice, brotherhood, and good will. To love your friends who love you in your own clique, society, group, or church, is not sufficient. Do not sinners and publicans the same? "I say unto you," said Christ, "love your enemies and do them good." How much more then does he direct us to love and serve the members of another society, group, or race, who may not even be our avowed enemies, but only have a different social loyalty!

"The sum of the whole matter is this," said Woodrow Wilson, shortly before he died, "that our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually. It can be saved only by becoming permeated with the spirit of Christ and being made free and happy by the practice which springs out of that spirit. Only thus can discontent be driven out and all the clouds be lifted from the road ahead."[31]

Expert sociologists agree with Ellwood in saying: "The fundamental principles of Christianity are in harmony with the fundamental principles of social science . . . It is time that organized Christianity became synonymous with the religion of Jesus. The vision which Jesus had of a social life based on love is not an unrealizable dream. Men have never intelligently tried to realize it in their social life."[32]

The goal of the Second Reformation is, then, only incidentally a new theology, based on historical and scientific truth; primarily it is a new society permeated by the spirit of Christ. All the details of the program for reaching this goal were not revealed in the Near East two milleniums ago, nor were they all expounded in the Bible, but the principles which must be applied and the spirit in which the end must be worked out, were exemplified in Christ, the Prince of the Prophets.

[31] Woodrow Wilson: Art. in the Atlantic Monthly, Aug. 1923.
[32] Charles A. Ellwood: The Reconstruction of Religion, p. 92.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIBLE OF ORTHODOX FAITH

"I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is the expression of His will."

CHANNING.

While the Protestants of the First Reformation differed from the orthodox of their time on the subject of the infallibility of the Church and the value of her sacraments, the Protestants of the Second Reformation differ from the orthodox of our time on the subject of the infallibility of the Bible and the value of the dogmas alleged to have its authority. It will be well, therefore, to institute a comparison between the traditional and modern views of the Bible. For our purpose a brief outline only must here suffice.

"The authority of the Holy Scripture," says the Westminster Confession, "dependeth wholly upon God, the author thereof." "Revelation," says Principal Shaw, "discloses the supernatural, particularly in the special intervention of the Trinity for human redemption. The term is frequently applied to the entire Scriptures, which form the Word of God. This is given to us by inspired men, and constitutes an infallible rule of faith and practice."[1] "Protestants," said Hodge, "hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and are infallible, and therefore free from error, whether of facts, doctrine or precept."[2] "The doctrinal systems of the Anglican, the Presbyterian, the Methodist and other churches," writes Canon Hague, "are all based

[1] W. I. Shaw: Digest of Methodist Doctrinal Standards, p. 24.
[2] Charles Hodge: Theology, I, p. 152.

upon the view that the Bible contains the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. . . . All the doctrines of the Church of Christ, from the greatest to the least, are based on this."[3]

Such without doubt, is the traditional faith of orthodox Christianity. Inasmuch as the highest spiritual and moral ideals known to men are expounded in the Bible, the vogue of this conception has had an incalculable influence for good in the moral evolution of mankind. But this advantage is apt to be forfeited on the discovery that the Bible does not possess all the qualities of inerrancy claimed for it. Even the sound spiritual instruction of its writers is apt to become discredited when the infallibility claimed for them proves to have been fictitious. The response of Progressive Christianity to this situation is a declaration that the spiritual life is not dependent upon the authority or infallibility of any book, but solely upon the living God, whose inner light of love and truth shines with growing radiance within the hearts and minds of men. The Bible is a human testimony, not a divine oracle. "Thus we see," writes Dr. Sunderland, "that instead of our Bible having been the creator of morals in the world, the very opposite is true. It was morals and religion in the world—ever growing and developing, ever struggling from dimness, confusion and weakness in men's minds, toward greater definiteness and strength—that produced our Bible and all other sacred books of mankind. . . The foundations of virtue and religion are not in any book, but in God, in the Nature of Things, in the Soul of Man."[4]

The Protestant doctrine of private judgment and personal responsibility is, however, a burden that most men would gladly evade. They desire relief from thinking out and choosing for themselves what is right and true. They desire something easier and so they seek for some external authority to rest upon, which will relieve them

[3]Dyson Hague: Fundamentals, I, p. 110.
[4]J. T. Sunderland: The Origin and Character of the Bible, p. 292.

of that responsibility. The dogmatic authority of Church or Book or Creed is a welcome relief from a disagreeably laborious task. Hence they view with disfavor the New Protestantism which urges them to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good." "To the multitude," says Matthew Arnold, "religion seems imposing only when it is subversive of reason, conveyed in documents sacred and infallible, confirmed by miracles, and dooming to damnation all without its pale."[5] Hence the popularity of that kind of religion is destined to continue for some time to come.

In the Carlovingian Capitularies, a digest of the legal ideas and methods of the Middle Ages, we find a curious procedure employed to determine guilt or innocence in conformity with this principle of the law—"In doubtful cases our opinion should be reserved for the judgment of God." To learn that judgment the Germanic tribes referred the case of an accused criminal to a jury for investigation and if they disagreed, he was required to submit to an ordeal in order that God might give the verdict. After prayer and fasting, the priest solemnly sprinkled a red hot bar of iron with holy water and blessed it in the name of the Trinity, after which the accused was required to seize the heated metal in his hand and walk three paces. The wounded hand was then bound up, to be examined after three days. If any pus was then found in the wound he was declared to be guilty, but if the wound were clean, he was innocent, for God had given the sign.[6]

Baffled by conflicting evidence, unskilled in methods of research, men have thus sought for divine guidance in many strange ways: from signs in the heavens, from the entrails of birds, from dreams, from lots and ordeals, from frenzied utterances of the insane, from sacred books and oracles. Having shifted responsibility for decision in regard to their course of action from reason to revela-

[5]Matthew Arnold: Essay on Spinoza and the Bible.
[6]Ephraim Emerton: Introduction to the Middle Ages, p. 83.

tion, finality and infallibility were ascribed to the decision thus obtained. To call in question this sacred revelation of the judgment of God was blasphemy.

By Urim and Thummim and the sacred ephod, the judgments of Jehovah were thought to be obtainable in ancient Israel. "The lot is cast into the lap but the decision cometh from Jehovah," was one of the proverbs of the people. It was like seeking to determine what to do in difficult situations by the use of a consecrated ouija board. The isolation of Saul from God and divine guidance is thus described—"And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, not by Urim, nor by the prophets."

In the course of time, a body of sacred decisions, obtained in this way, gained the authority of precedents and were referred to as "the judgments of Jehovah." These formed the nucleus of a collection of oracles, which continued to grow. Priests, princes, and prophets contributed to its formation. The need of fresh consultations and revelations declined as reliance was more and more placed on past judgments. Appeal was less and less made to the Living God and more frequently to the oracles of the past. A "book-religion" developed. "In place of the prophets and priests who, in earlier times, handed down the will of God to the people, we have teachers of the law and scribes."[7] The Interpreter took rank beside the ancient Revealer; the Scribe took the place of the sacred lot and the inspired Seer.

By a process of selection and revision a body of sacred literature thus grew up, which gradually acquired the reputation of oracular infallibility for the guidance of Israel. This was later enlarged by some writings of early members of the Christian Church and became the "Word of God," their infallible rule of faith and practice. The sacred books became final authority to relieve men of the need of fresh consultations with the

[7]Karl Marti: Religion of the Old Testament, p. 187.

Living God or of deciding for themselves what was right and true. "Oracles they became," says White, "oracles they remained for centuries; eternal life and death, infinite happiness and agony, as well as the ordinary justice of the world, being made to depend on shifting interpretations of dark and doubtful utterances."[8]

Ignoring the process of their development and the inconsistencies of their contents, these sacred books, inherited from the past, were received by the churches as a body of truth revealed from heaven. "Christianity," said Pope, "is the only religion the world has received directly from heaven . . . The revelation given by God is the Christian faith received by man . . . Revelation appeals to a universal faculty of human nature, the faculty of believing . . . It is a body of truth, which, as Reason did not give it, so Reason cannot take it away . . . Faith is elevated to receive it and Reason is humbled to submit to it. Like sin in the presence of divine justice, Reason shuts her mouth and is silent . . . Hence it is that with regard to the Christian system as a whole, miracle is essential to its demonstration . . . For without miracle there is no Christian Revelation . . . The secret of an unbelieving rejection of the Christian Revelation must be traced to an explicit or implicit resistance to the Holy Spirit."[9]

When the Protestant reformers revolted against the priesthood and restored the Bible to the people, they did so with the injunction to tolerate no interpretation of the sacred texts that would conflict with the authorized creeds. Though Reason rebel, Faith must receive what had been given. "It is the quality of faith," said Luther, "that it wrings the neck of Reason and strangles the beast. But how? It holds to God's word; let that be right and true, no matter how foolish and impossible it sounds."[10] The reformers differed from the priests

[8]Andrew White: Warfare of Science with Theology, II, p. 294.
[9]W. B. Pope: Compendium of Christian Theology, I, pp. 42, 66, 151, 45 ff.
[10]Charles Beard: Lectures on the Reformation, p. 132.

only in the method of executing Reason. They would do it with a sacred text; the priests with canon law or a papal bull.

Students of the sacred books admitted that they were in many places hard to understand and that they made contradictory statements. What referee should decide in cases of disputed meanings? The Roman Church elected itself to that office. "An infallible book," says Cardinal Gibbons, "is of no use to me without an infallible interpreter, as the history of Protestantism too clearly shows."[11] It might be likened to a code of laws needing a Supreme Court to interpret and apply them. The Roman Church set itself up as that Court, and in its decisions claimed to be infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit. Pope Leo the Great stated the mind of the Church: "All that has been received by the custom and tradition of the Church should be considered as derived from tradition and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."[12]

When, in the year 1545, the Council of Trent met to settle questions raised by the Reformation, the ecclesiastics first went to the cathedral to hear Mass. "A bishop preached the sermon," says Froude, "in which he promised his brother prelates that the Holy Spirit would come upon them like water on dry land. The Holy Ghost, he said candidly, might not improve their characters or touch their hearts, but He would direct their judgments and forbid them to err."[13] Thus the Roman Church solemnly verified her own decisions and pronounced them to be the voice of God. She challenged anyone to deny it at his peril.

Protestants denied this divine authority of the Church of Rome that they might claim it for themselves. The Pope and bishops were not inspired to find the truth for others, but the humble believer might himself be a priest, guided by the Holy Spirit, and so be a com-

[11] Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, pp. 85–92.
[12] See Question Box by Father Bertrand Conway, Paulist Fathers, p. 74.
[13] J. A. Froude: Lectures on the Council of Trent, p. 183.

petent interpreter of the Word of God for his own life. The fact that one could believe, in spite of Reason, was taken as a miracle of grace proving the divine guidance. "But the same Spirit," says the eminent theologian already quoted, "who opens the eye of faith, gives Reason its perfect soundness, so that it consents to accept what it cannot itself verify."[9]

"It should be stressed," we are told by recent Fundamentalists, "that the Bible cannot be understood apart from the Spirit of God, who gave and inspired the majestic Book. He alone is the Sovereign Interpreter. Only He who gave can correctly interpret it."[14] This is precisely the position of the Roman Church, with the difference that the Protestant claims a private infallibility for himself which he denies to the Pope in his official capacity. What room does this leave to reply to the scoffer who would retort that such a belief is a poor compliment to the literary ability of God, who writes a Book which cannot be understood by the readers to whom it is addressed? If His Book cannot be understood without divine aid, one would suppose that such guidance might be directly given and the indirect divine aid of the Book dispensed with. When men strangle Reason in the interests of propaganda, they become capable of any absurdity.

The delusion of an infallible authority qualified to supplant Reason, has been the *ignis fatuus* of the Church. Under the tyranny of such a delusion it is made a pious duty to perpetuate the errors of the past. As Sabatier says, "The Catholic is bound to believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, not because he is convinced it is true, but because the Church has so ordained, in like manner, the Protestant ought to believe in demoniacal possession, because the Bible so teaches . . . In both cases, Christianity, enjoined by an exterior law, renounces its original character, that of being

[14]G. W. McPherson: The Crisis in Church and College, p. 75.

the inspiration of conscience, a free and living soul power, and descends to the rank of a legal religion . . ."[15] The effect of this rule of religious cloture is to engender a blighting fear of every new discovery, whether it be the germ theory of disease or the doctrine of the evolution of man. Where this medievalism prevails new truth is treated as dangerous contraband and traffickers in it are condemned as enemies of souls. God is not permitted to do more than interpret His Book, after the manner of a scribe. Upon this principle of dogmatic authority, buttressed by ancient texts, verified by the suppression of Reason, traditional Christianity rests its case.

It is popularly supposed that the traditional dogmas of the churches originated in a divine revelation to certain chosen Israelites. This delusion dies but slowly. "The claim of the Church," says Harnack, one of the greatest of living authorities, "that the dogmas are simply an exposition of Christian Revelation is not confirmed by historical investigation. On the contrary, it becomes clear that dogmatic Christianity was the work of the Hellenic spirit upon gospel soil."[16]

"Dogma," writes Eucken, "in fact, though it appears to mark the complete triumph of Christianity, in reality testifies to a surrender to Greek speculation."[17] To make the orthodox dogmas, Catholic or Protestant, the product of a special revelation to Israel, is like attributing the origin of Bolshevism to the American Declaration of Independence.

The sixteen hundredth anniversary of the Nicene Council, which formulated the fundamental creed of orthodoxy, has recently been celebrated. The fathers assembled in that Council were in most cases great and good men, who served their generation conscientiously, according to their light. We are glad to praise their vir-

[15] Auguste Sabatier: Religions of Authority, pp. 176, 185.
[16] Adolf Harnack: History of Dogma, pp. 383, 194.
[17] Rudolf Eucken: The Problem of Human Life, p. 199.

tues. But a knowledge of history moderates one's enthusiasm for the belief that they were divinely guided in their fulminations. "Nowhere," says Dean Milman, "is Christianity less attractive than in the Councils of the Church . . . Intrigue, injustice, violence, decisions by authority alone, and that the authority of a turbulent majority, detract from the reverence and impugn the judgment of at least the later councils. The close is almost invariably a terrible anathema, in which it is impossible not to discern the tones of human hatred, of arrogant triumph, of rejoicing at the damnation imprecated against the humiliated adversary."[18] "The entire history of Christian doctrine in those disordered centuries," says Wells, "is a history of theology by committee, a history of furious wrangling, of hasty compromises and still more hasty attempts to clinch matters by anathema."[19]

His examination of the sources of traditional Christian doctrines forced Percy Gardner to say: "This brief consideration of the intellectual atmosphere in which the Christian creed arose is sufficient to show how entirely it was exposed to imperfections and errors of all kinds. Undeveloped science, imperfect philosophy, perverted notions of history, all presided over its formation . . . The Christian Creeds and Articles are curious compounds, which grew up in an atmosphere saturated with false notions as to science, false notions as to history. They contain many elements foreign to the teaching of the Founder of Christianity. They contain elements contrary to science and history."[20]

Hatch showed conclusively "that a large part of what are called Christian doctrines, and many of the usages which have prevailed and continue to prevail in the Christian Church, are in reality Greek theories and Greek usages, changed in form and color by the influence

[18]Dean Milman: History of Latin Christianity, I, p. 227.
[19]H. G. Wells: God, the Invisible King, p. 10 ff.
[20]Percy Gardner: Exploratio Evangelica, pp. 257, 364.

of primitive Christianity, but in their essence Greek still. . . . The conceptions which were introduced into the sphere of Christian thought were the current ones of philosophy. In Christian theology that philosophy has survived."[21] "The line from Plato to Origen, and we may add, to the present day, is unbroken," writes Moore. "Thus we find that Greek philosophy furnished the general plan for a statement of Christianity. . . . The victory over Pagan religions and philosophies was certain, but this success on the intellectual side was secured by the transformation of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles into a Greek philosophy."[22]

Fairbairn concedes that the Nicene theology is inadequate, but nevertheless regards it as "altogether normal when conceived as a stage in the development of Christain thought. In it Greek philosophy was translated into Christian theology, and, of course, its translation did not mean its death."[23] "These Church controversies," says Dean Inge, "were the old philosophical battles fought out again with new weapons."[24] "Each step of dogma," writes Loisy, "marks the introduction of Greek philosophy into Christianity."[25] Such an origin for the dogmatic system of the Church is not at all a source to be discredited; it merely indicates the natural and human origin of the dogmas. They were not a part of an original divine revelation in Israel but a composite of Hebrew mythology, Christian tradition, and Greek speculation.

"It is manifest," says Bishop Gore, "that the Greek genius, which exercised itself rightfully within the Church in defining and protecting the fundamental faith of Christendom, became enamoured of its own intellectualism and to a lamentable extent distorted the true character and estimate of the Christian religion. . . .

[21]Edwin Hatch: Influence of Greek Ideas, etc., pp. 350, 269 ff.
[22]C. H. Moore: Religious Thought among the Greeks, p. 225 ff.
[23]A. M. Fairbairn: The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 92.
[24]W. R. Inge: Personal Idealism and Mysticism, p. 67.
[25]A. Loisy: The Gospel and the Church, p. 193.

While, in fact, under the dominant influence of Greek intellectualism the interest in the intellectual propositions and formulae became the foremost interest, and the Church presented itself to the world, not as a society called to live a life, but as a society maintaining a very elaborate system of doctrine, the propagation of which was its chief business."[26]

We are quite willing to give the intellectualism of the first Christian centuries its due, but we do not feel inclined to look up to the Christian thinkers of that period as the final authority, either in cosmology, physics, history, philosophy, or theology. Those of us who cannot receive as "gospel truth" the doctrines they formulated are often accused of "blind unbelief" and "cold intellectualism," because we cannot acknowledge as final and divine authority the doctrinal conclusions of the "Greek intellectualism" of the early Church. We simply believe that the modern equivalent of Greek intellectualism, enlightened as it is by more recent scientific and historical knowledge, is preferable and a more reliable guide to truth. To retain and profess belief in the dogmas of the ancient Church, after the philosophical principles, which gave them birth, have been abandoned, may be nearer to resisting the Holy Spirit than any failure to believe them.

This tendency to Hellenize Christianity began early. The destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. hastened the decline of Jewish Christianity and marked the beginning of the supremacy of Gentile thought in the churches. "By the year 100 A.D." says Wernle, "we are almost justified in saying that the germ had been formed of the complete transformation of Christianity. To judge by externals indeed, the Greeks are still called wicked heathen, whose gods are demons. Whilst Christianity proclaims itself as the true Judaism it would only be regarded as the enemy of Paganism. And yet how

[26]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, p. 222.

much it borrows in the sphere of religion and philosophy alike. The Greek religion presented it with the new God Jesus, the mysteries, and the picture of hell, while Greek philosophy furnished a rational faith. . . . These accretions turned out to be both a blessing and a curse to Christendom. . . . And the evil excrescences of Greek intellectualism, sophistry, rhetorical extravagance the love of argument, make their entry into the churches. But at the same time the intellectual horizon of Christians is widened."[27] As a result of this transformation, the priestly and prophetic elements taken from the Bible were given new meanings, and the teachings of Christ and his disciples were incorporated with a system of ritual, drawn largely from the mystery religions, and combined with a system of theology rationalized in the terms of current philosophies.

In the controversies of the period the Bible acquired a new usefulness. Whenever the arguments of theologians were found to be inadequate to produce conviction, they could be supplemented by an appeal to the sacred writings of the Jews, which had been received into the Church at the valuation set upon them by the rabbis. The Christian writings themselves were not at first revered as the "Word of God" and only gradually acquired an authority equal to that of the Old Testament. They lacked the advantage of antiquity. If the doctrines of the Greek theologians could be demonstrated from the Old Testament, which had been taken over from the Jews as a divine revelation, they might be regarded as indisputable. To the task of extracting from the ancient oracles the proofs of the more recent Christian beliefs, which were developing, theologians who were men of genius applied themselves. The desired result was achieved by the method sanctioned by the usage of the apostles themselves, namely, the allegorical or mystical interpreting of the sacred writings. The

[27] Paul Wernle: The Beginnings of Christianity, II, p. 167.

reward of this method was twofold. By confirming their own beliefs in this way confidence in the Old Testament as an authority for faith was strengthened and that authority could then be used to establish beliefs which otherwise might be deemed to be only the speculations of men. It is therefore necessary to examine briefly this method of using the Bible as a source of proof-texts for doctrines brought to it for support.

The allegorical or mystical interpretation proceeded on the assumption that the sacred writers meant more than appeared on the surface of their words. Beneath the historical and literal meanings of their writings were hidden secondary meanings, of which the writers themselves might have been unaware. The God of revelation had planned that these secondary meanings were to remain veiled for a time, in order that at a later date the veil might be lifted by a Spirit-guided interpreter who would disclose the hidden truth. The problem was to find the correct code that would unlock the meaning of the revelation, written in these heavenly ciphers. When men differed as to the correct key, the Church, by a vote of a Council, assumed the authority to settle the matter. The same method is still followed by those who imagine that they can decipher the future history of the world or the date of the Coming of Christ from the ancient prophecies.

By means of the allegorical method, Philo had read the ideas of the Greek philosophy into the works of Moses; and following his example, the Christian fathers were able to inject the Christian dogmas into the Old Testament texts. Extraordinary discoveries have in this way been made. By it Philo found that the four streams of the Garden of Eden were the four virtues; Origen that the list of Jewish kings is an enumeration of human sins and that the amorous Song of Solomon celebrates the love of Christ for the Church. By it the Trinity was discovered in the three men who appeared

unto Abraham; Jesus was identified with the Angel of Jehovah; and the atonement of Calvary was said to be typified in the sacrifices of the altar. Mrs. Eddy, by the same method, has learned that "the book of Genesis, spiritually followed, is the history of the untrue image of God," and that "Adam, the synonym of error, stands for the belief of mortal mind."

"The Jews," writes Cardinal Newman, "clung to the literal sense of the Scriptures and hence rejected the Gospel; the Christian apologists proved its divinity by means of the allegorical. It may almost be laid down as an historical fact, that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy stand or fall together. . . . The use, then, of Scripture, especially its spiritual or secondary sense, is a characteristic principle of the Church. . . Her most subtle and powerful method of proof, whether in ancient or modern times, is the mystical sense, which is so frequently used in doctrinal controversy as on many occasions to supersede any other."[28]

The only fault with Newman's statement is that it deprives the Jews of the credit of having discovered this "most subtle and powerful method" of proving what one would wish to prove, by the simple method of attaching the desired meaning to the words of an ancient writer regardless of the meaning he wished to convey. "The Palestinian Jews," says an eminent authority, "allegorized the Old Testament, finding hidden sense in sentences, words, letters, even vowel points, in order to satisfy their consciences for the non-observance of laws that had become impracticable or to defend God against apparent inconsistency, or historical characters against impiety or immorality. . . The Hellenistic Jews allegorized the Old Testament to prove that their sacred books were neither barbarous nor immoral nor impious, that their religion had the same rationale as the Greek

[28]Cardinal J. H. Newman: Development of Christian Doctrine, p. 342.

philosophy, and that Moses had been the teacher of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics."[29]

The only limit to this method of discovering ideas which one wished to find in the sacred writings was the inventiveness of men in devising new codes of interpretation. Because this method is contrary to all modern canons of literary, historical, or scientific interpretation, it vitiates for us all the doctrinal conclusions reached in this way.

The early Christians, like the Jews, appealed to the Old Testament writings as the very oracles of God, but coming to them with new experiences, they professed to find in them ideas that the Jews had never found. In his Pentecostal sermon, Peter quotes a Jewish psalm to prove that the death and resurrection of a descendant of David should be the crowning proof that he is the Messiah. The legitimacy of this interpretation the Jews denied. The first task undertaken by the disciples was to show that Jesus was proven to be the Messiah by as many of these prophetic utterances and types in the Old Testament as possible. "As we have seen," says Moffatt, "the proof from the Old Testament was what finally legitimized Jesus as Messiah in the eyes of a Jew. Human tradition was not enough. The primitive disciples might give their evidence about what he said and what he did; but the clinching question remained, Was there any word of this in the Old Testament? To convince the Jews, the disciples had to adduce anticipations and predictions from Scripture."[30] When the rabbis rejected the interpretations of the disciples, they retorted that these scholars did not know the real meaning of their own sacred texts. That which the learned had missed had been revealed to unlearned fishermen.

In meeting this demand for Old Testament proofs, the disciples were forced to twist and strain the language of the ancient writers to their purpose. In this way

[29]Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, I, p. 65.
[30]James Moffatt: The Approach to the New Testament, p. 94.

they could claim that they but followed the precedent set by many of the rabbis themselves. Beneath the literal and original meanings of passages they sought for mystical, allegorical, and secondary meanings that would be convincing. Matthew undertakes to prove that Jesus was Messiah by showing that he was a son of David through Joseph, his father. When a new phase of thought arose and a text was discovered that might be construed to indicate a more august paternity, Joseph's paternity stood in the way and it was ignored. All such proofs are introduced with the formula, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." The genealogy leading to David was set aside in favor of a secondary meaning attached to a verse in Isaiah—words spoken by that great preacher to a harassed king. "Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. vii. 8). In reality it has no more reference to the birth of Jesus than to the birth of Paul. As Parks explains: "So a careful examination of the prophecy shows that the prophet was declaring that a young woman, possibly his own wife, would bear a child in a year or two, and that certain historical events, connected with Damascus and Samaria, would take place before the child was old enough to know the difference between good and evil—which things did come to pass. This child was to be called Immanuel, meaning 'God with us,' because in a few years there would be a revelation of God's presence as the protecting power of Zion."[31] By attaching to the passage a meaning entirely foreign to the whole context, the authority of "the Word of God" was secured for believing in the Virgin Birth of Jesus. This but illustrates the unwarranted methods by which many of the Christian traditions were established as articles of faith.

In the same way, it was sought to prove the kingship

[31]Leighton Parks: What is Modernism?, p. 72.

of the Messiah-Jesus by the fact that he rode into Jerusalem upon an ass (Matt. xxi.). Zechariah had seen the promise, in the political events of his time, of a speedy restoration of Israel under their own king and said, "I will stir up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and will make thee the sword of a mighty man . . . Behold thy king cometh to thee riding on an ass" (Zech. ix.). This expectation was never fulfilled. Nevertheless, the words were offered by the disciples as proof that Jesus was the promised king, though he definitely had declined to make Israel "the sword of a mighty man" against the sons of Greece.

This ability to extract hidden meanings from old texts in favor of the Christian beliefs was highly esteemed as a gift of the spirit. It was spoken of as a talent for "the interpretation of prophecy." Nor are its possibilities yet exhausted, as witness the constant stream of publications still issued to prove that the events of the modern world were described in mystical or symbolical language in Daniel or Revelation. The Baconian cipher in Shakespeare is mere kindergarten amusement compared with this ingenious "gift of interpretation" of "the Word of God" for theological purposes.

Paul could use this gift with great skill and this recommended it to his immediate successors. Why should Christians be freed from observance of the Jewish law? The plain common-sense answer was not sufficient justification; the authority of a sacred oracle must be invoked. The answer was that Abraham had two sons, one by a handmaid, the other by a legal wife. One was the child of bondage, the other the child of liberty and the legal heir. "Which things contain an allegory," said Paul, and its interpretation is that Christians are the children of promise delivered by Christ from the yoke of bondage and the legal heirs of the promises of God, and the Jews are the children of bondage.

Paul's use of this method set a fatal example for sub-

sequent theologians, who have found it a "subtle and powerful method of proof." "Paul's method of procedure," says Toy, "betrays his rabbinical training; he not only gives to general Old Testament expressions the technical senses of his own theology, but he allegorizes incidents and words into meanings remote from their original intention."[32] Or, in the words of Wrede, "He generally extracts from Scripture only what he has read into it. A favorite device of his is the allegorical interpretation, by which we escape the yoke of the letter, without derogating from its sanctity . . . Here the motto is, 'Anything can mean anything,' if one only recognizes the secret sense."[33]

"Not only was Paul's doctrine that the Old Testament scripture is the infallibly inspired Word of God that of the Jews of his time," says Cone, "but his interpretation of it conformed to the current rabbinical method, which applied to the text violent exegetical pressure and unlimited allegorizing. Accordingly he finds a promise of Christ in the promise to Abraham, because it is made to the 'offspring' of the latter and not to his 'offsprings' . . . The injunction in the law not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn he allegorizes and applies as if the intention of the writer had been to teach that the apostles should have the support of the congregations to which they ministered. It was written, he maintains, on the missionaries' account, since God does not care for oxen."[34]

Why then did not the learned Jews agree with Paul? The answer is furnished by Wernle: "St. Paul introduced the Old Testament in all his churches as the sacred canon, the only divinely inspired book. This was an event of the very greatest importance in the history of Christianity. The Jewish national literature is declared to be divine, and is to become the sacred

[32] C. H. Toy: Judaism and Christianity, p. 138.
[33] W. Wrede: Paul, p. 78.
[34] Orello Cone: The Gospel and its Earliest Interpretations, p. 156.

book of the Greek and Roman converts to Christianity, whilst at the same time it is the sacred book of the Jews, the bitter opponents of Christianity. How is this possible? The Pauline gnosis furnishes the answer . . . But the inspired Book demands an inspired exegesis. For this purpose the Jews had the order of the rabbis, who were especially endowed by God with gifts of the Spirit in order to interpret the Scripture. Here is the source of the Pauline theory of knowledge. He denies the spiritual endowment of the rabbis, and proclaims himself and the Christian teachers to be inspired. It is evident that one of the two parties must be wrong; the former proves from the Old Testament that Jesus was a criminal; the other that he was the Messiah. The Christians must be right, because, generally speaking, the Spirit is poured out amongst them in richest measure . . . The Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is the only one that has any authority . . . The Jews, even the rabbis, understand nothing about it. Satan hath blinded their minds . . . At bottom, the whole of this apologetic gnosis is, of course, a mere theological fabrication, whereby we are transplanted into an artificial world . . . Even the Christian sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are discovered in the pillar of cloud, in the Red Sea, in the water from the rock, in the manna. And on the other hand, the Christian Church is conceived of in Jewish fashion as the Israel of God unto whom are all the promises . . . The Pauline gnosis claimed to be a revealed exegesis of the Old Testament."[35]

Thus was perpetrated one of the most extraordinary acts of confiscation in all history. The Jews were dispossessed of their sacred writings and the reason given was that they were so deluded by the devil that they could not understand their true and veiled meaning. After appropriating them, the Church proceeded to treat

[35] Paul Wernle: The Beginnings of Christianity, I, p. 324 ff.

them as Books full of mystical meanings which Christians alone were competent to discern.

"In doing this," says Fullerton, "and in becoming more and more a church of Gentile converts, it lost the power to appreciate the historical meaning of the Old Testament to a degree impossible for a Jew or even for a Jewish Christian, who had not, as in the case of Philo, become dominated by philosophical prepossession. Here, then, we have the two conditions which we have seen invariably give rise to allegory, the possession of an inspired Scripture and the inability to appreciate its original meaning. Lastly, and this is of fundamental importance, the Fathers could cite as precedent and example for their allegorical treatment of the Old Testament the method followed by the New Testament writers themselves."[36]

"As has already been observed, the Old Testament was at first the only canon of the Christian Church. The New Testament writings only gradually acquired canonical dignity."[36] Only after the lapse of several generations were the writings of the apostles and their associates elevated by the Church to an equality with the more ancient Jewish writings. When they finally were gathered and made into a new collection of inspired books, in the faith of the Church, a new array of proof-texts was acquired, which might be interpreted by the same methods as the old ones. New theological beliefs had in the meantime grown up, as we have seen, largely through the influence of the mystery religions and the Greek philosophy, and support of these was sought in the Apostolical writings. That the writers themselves did not entertain these beliefs made no difference, for the idea of allegorical, mystical, and secondary meanings to be found in the texts was in secure possession of the field of religion. To understand what a writer meant to convey in his words was less important than to impart

[36] Kemper Fullerton: Prophecy and Authority, pp. 68, 67.

to his words the meaning approved by the Church. For example, Jesus had been called the "son of God," a title applicable to the royal Messiah of Israel. After he came to be regarded, under the influence of current thought, as a divine being come down from heaven, added dignity was furnished to the title by making it mean the only begotten "Son of God," which was finally transposed into "God the Son." The term "Christ" served no longer as a synonym for the term "Messiah" in the apostolic sense, but came to mean also the immanent spirit of God. Were the same labor and ingenuity expended on an exposition of Homer, it would no doubt be able to reveal types, symbols, allegories, mystical and veiled meanings in the epic of the Trojan War, by which the poet had described the drama of man's Fall and Redemption. The possibilities of this method are inexhaustible.

And thus, by reading the Bible as he reads no other literature, by ignoring the historical and literary meanings of its writers and finding in their words something entirely different, the reader is supposed to gain the unspeakable advantage of possessing an infallible revelation of truth. The revelation remains infallible to him so long as it can be made to confirm his own opinions. Discrepancies and difficulties disappear in the universal solvent of a credulous imagination, and historical errors and mythical fancies, poetry and legend, ancient customs and beliefs, fact and fiction, by the diligent use of allegory, type, symbol, and mystical interpretations, are translated into an embodiment of revealed truth. Thus enlightened, the believer can say, "If the Christian make full use of his Christian privileges, he finds the seat of authority in the whole Bible, which he regards as no mere word of man but as the very Word of God. . . . The Holy Spirit so informed the minds of Biblical writers that they were kept free from falling into the errors that mar all other books."[37]

[37] J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, p. 74.

The purpose to which modern biblical scholars have devoted themselves has been to clear away this vast undergrowth of fanciful interpretations and misunderstood meanings, and to lay bare what the writers actually said and what the hearers of their own generation understood that they meant when they said it. When this is done, that which these writers learned of life may be used for our instruction and the natural errors of their time may be freely abandoned.

The objection to this attitude toward the Bible raised by the defenders of its infallibility, is that, "It never predicates finality to any statement simply because that statement is found in the Bible. It does not hesitate to say that Peter or Paul may have been mistaken."[38] Or, as Dr. Bettex cries, "If this modern criticism is true, then away with all so-called Christianity, which deceives us with idle tales. Away with religion which has nothing to offer but the commonplace teachings of morality. Away with hope. Away with faith. Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."[39] Alas for man, if he must abandon faith, hope and morality, if it can be shown that Moses erred or Paul blundered! Alas, if the high ideals of Christ or Paul will have to be abandoned because we cannot believe in demons as they did! How sad that God can be found nowhere save in the words of a book, and a book of such a character that it is said a miracle of enlightenment by the Holy Spirit is needed to give understanding of its true meaning! Such skepticism often passes among the blind for faith of the purest water.

Early Christians allegorized the Old Testament in order to prove their doctrines. Later Christians read Gentile beliefs into Apostolic writings and wrested text from context to prove their creeds. Dogmas were derived from mystical interpretations of Christian writ-

[38]G. W. McPherson: The Crisis in Church and College, p. 137.
[39]Dr. Bettex: Fundamentals, IV, p. 87.

ings as Christian writings had previously drawn proofs by the same method of mystical interpretations of Jewish writings. The art of finding new meanings in old phrases has been an invaluable makeshift in theology and is still popular. Now, we are told that even the creeds need no longer be believed in their original and literal sense, that their truth lies ambiguously hidden in their secondary or symbolical meanings. A distinguished divine refers thus to the use of the Apostles' Creed: "Creation, descent into hell, ascension and the resurrection of the body were originally conceived as "facts." No educated man today believes them to be a fact, but symbols of truth. . . . The Fundamentalist repeats every article of the Creed *ex animo* (with a clear conscience), because he is intellectually still in the second century. The Traditionalist repeats the same Creed *ex animo* but, having passed out of the intellectual atmosphere of the second century he interprets certain articles with the intellectual change he has experienced. The Modernist also repeats the ancient words *ex animo* but *interprets* every article in accordance with the intellectual atmosphere which he is breathing."[40] It is all very convenient, if the game is worth the candle. Each class may attach to the same phrases contrary and mutually exclusive meanings. The fossils of extinct thought can thus be preserved in the amber of piety as more sacred than the true words of sincere men among the living. Repeating traditional phrases with mental reservations and private interpretations, the faithful are taught to execrate as dangerous the frank though heretical statement of historical and scientific truth. Weary of double meanings, ambiguities, and religious allegories, plain men, who believe that language was invented to express and not conceal thought, exclaim, "Why not end this whole shabby business and all of us say exactly what we mean?"

[40] Leighton Parks: What is Modernism?, pp. 95, 103.

"Still lip loyal to what once was truth,
Smuggling new meanings under ancient names,
Unconscious perverts of the Jesuit, Time,"

men unite in the recitation of their ancient creeds, while retaining their discordant interpretations and call attention to the proceeding as evidence that they hold the Christian Faith in common.

Paul took up this method of harmonizing past and present, because it was in common use in his day and adapted it to meet the intellectual difficulties of those he addressed. His ultimate object, however, was not the establishment of his beliefs as fixed and final statements of truth for all time. He was seeking to save the people of the Near East in the first century from their superstitions and sins. In the midst of Jewish formalism, Greek skepticism, and Roman barbarities, in the midst of wickedness and sensuality, he pleaded with men to seek the same kind of spiritual life that had been manifested in Christ. He revived faith in God as the All-Powerful Spirit of Life, abiding in the world to break down the power of sin in the heart and impart to men the spirit of love and holiness. As a means of persuading them to espouse the Christian Way of Life, he testified concerning the power of God revealed in Christ and in his own heart. Men, he said, are called to be sons of God, as Jesus was, "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," through the renewing of their lives by faith, hope, and love. All his arguments are intended to induce spiritual and ethical changes of character, not to impose intellectual dogma, though at times his own intensity of conviction in his own beliefs betrayed him into anathematizing his opponents. He was passionately convinced of the validity of his own theological arguments; what strong man is not? But he kept his spiritual purpose steadily in view, as supreme. He discounted religious emotionalism, the "gossolalia" or "speaking with tongues." Proficiency in the true spiritual life is

not shown in religious intellectualism, the understanding of all mysteries, and the gift of interpreting ancient oracles. It is not benevolence to the poor. It is not the sacrifice of life for one's beliefs. The Christian life is just a changed manner of living day by day. It is living in a distinguished way—a way distinguished by the absence of venom, spite, envy, jealousy, malice, pride, anger, greed, and meanness. He said, "Put away all bitterness, malice, backbiting, wrath, and evil speaking. Love one another and let love be without dissimulation, the same behind the back as before the face, the love that is kind, that is not easily provoked, that rejoices with others and helps them to bear their burdens, the love that does not worry but gives comfort, the love that returns kindness for unkindness, good for evil, gentleness for cruelty, the love that gladdens all and saddens none." Such a life manifested in Christ was to Paul the life of God in the soul of man, the secret of salvation, the proof of faith, the will of God for men. In finding it, men become "partakers of the divine nature" and the Spirit of God abides in them as in Christ (I Cor. xiii.; Eph. v.).

Whether we can agree with Paul's or the Church's theology to-day, with all the statements of the Bible or not, with orthodoxy or heresy, is of far less consequence than to find our way successfully to "the faith that works by love," to the renewing of heart and life after the image of Him who created man to become like Him. Such a life will find the Bible an inexhaustible treasure house of spiritual truth, though not infallible, through the study of which "the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

CHAPTER IX

THE BIBLE OF MODERN HERESY

"The Bible is a blessed book, rightly used, yet the Bible may be causing more spiritual evil than any other book, if by it you smother the Holy Spirit within yourselves, and condemn those who love God."

F. W. Newman.

Speaking for consistent traditionalists of all churches, Machen notes the position of religious liberalism "that Christianity is a life and not a doctrine," in order to condemn it, saying, "Christianity is not only a life, but also a doctrine and logically the doctrine comes first." In illustration, he continues: "Having a present experience of Christ in the heart, may we not, it is said, hold that experience, no matter what history may tell us as to the events of the first Easter morning? The trouble is that the experience thus maintained *is not Christian experience* . . . My Christian life then depends altogether upon the truth of the New Testament records . . . Christian experience is rightly used when it helps to convince us that the events narrated in the New Testament actually did occur."[1]

Salvation from eternal ruin is made to depend upon passing through the full cycle of the Christian experience; that passage depends upon faith; that faith is not a true faith issuing in a truly Christian experience unless it rests confidently upon the accuracy and historicity of the cardinal events narrated in the New Testament; and when such a faith is followed by conversion the occurrence of the events recorded in the New Testament is to be regarded as confirmed. Hence the whole spiritual life and destiny of man hang suspended upon believing

[1] J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, pp. 19, 23, 71, 72.

in the reliability of some ancient manuscripts. So huge an assumption, as baseless as it is unwise, is a more serious obstacle to the progress of Christianity than most people seem to realize. Nothing is more needed at the present time than to square our understanding of the Bible with the rest of our knowledge.

This traditional Protestantism, for opposition to which all forms of Progressive Christianity are so fervently condemned, is clearly stated by a former Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, Mark A. Matthews, who says, "There could be no redemption if the Virgin Birth had not occurred." He undertakes to show why it was necessary to the redemption of mankind that Jesus should have no father but God. It was in order to "offer a sacrifice sufficient that men might be redeemed." On this account, he maintains, "The most important subject that could be possibly discussed is the Virgin Birth of Jesus." Upon the authority of Matthew and Luke he attaches so much importance to this alleged event for these reasons: (1) "It is absolutely essential to the unsaved man because he cannot be saved if the virgin birth is not true"; (2) "On the fact of the virgin birth rests the credibility of scripture . . . If it is true then all scripture stands as the infallible Word of God. If it is false, the whole Bible is false. Is that not important?" Dogmatically assuming the truth of such statements, he goes on to declare, "The enemies of God are making an attack upon the virgin birth; they are trying to discredit the records . . . The saints—God's children, the born again—know experimentally as well as historically, the truth of the doctrine. They have experienced its blessedness, and are not shaken in their faith." On the other hand, those who cannot bring themselves to believe the story of the virgin birth to have been more than a fanciful legend, "are, no doubt, rationalists, direct agents of Satan . . . We hope they will leave the visible ecclesiastical organ-

ization and go out into the world, into the synagogue of Satan and stay there, for they, most assuredly, have no real place in the real church of Jesus Christ . . . If the statements as to the birth of Jesus are not infallible, and if he was not born of a virgin, then it is impossible for one to be saved. Therefore the whole plan of salvation is involved, and the salvation of men is at stake in this fight."[2]

Why such exhibitions of intolerance over a difference of opinion on a subject concerning which neither Jesus nor Paul has a word to say; an account of his origin which was evidently unknown to the family of Jesus, who treated the son and brother as if he were a normal member of the family? They are prompted and sustained by the belief that the event is an essential part of the theological drama of redemption and must be true because recorded in an infallible manuscript.

It has seemed necessary to quote these statements, representing as they do the position of traditional Protestantism, in order to make the issue clear. No salvation is possible without faith and that faith must include belief of such statements as the virgin birth of Jesus and his bodily resurrection, on the infallible authority of Scripture, or there can be no real Christian experience of salvation. In other words, if one finds himself unable honestly to subscribe to certain statements in the Bible and the traditional interpretation of them, he supplies proof that he is destitute of true faith and doomed to perdition. Thus the old dogmatic intolerance is revived against which the spirit of Christian heresy has struggled for centuries, in its efforts to achieve liberty of thought in religion.

Heresy's fundamental principle is this: The highest spiritual life, called in the Church, Christian experience and conduct, is a life of voluntary obedience in trust and love to the will of God as interpreted by Christ,

[2]Mark A. Matthews: Art in the Christian Century, April 30, 1925.

and is not dependent upon the infallibility of any text or creed. It verifies itself as good by its results in personal and social life but may no more be quoted in proof of the virgin birth of Jesus or any other event related in Scripture than in proof of the assassination of Caesar. In the words of Macintosh, "Salvation consists in becoming essentially Christlike in character and work. This is essentially the Christian experience of salvation . . . It may be worth while to point out the mistaken notion that the adjustment is primarily or even exclusively intellectual . . . Experience has long ago and time after time refuted this idea . . . The right religious adjustment must be sought primarily in the volitional rather than in the intellectual realm."[3] Interpretation, whether of the experience or of the Bible, and the formulation of doctrines belong to the "intellectual realm" and all assumption is unwarranted that the conclusions thus reached condition the experience of one who wills to do the will of God from the heart.

Liberal Christians, following with varying degrees of assurance the dictates of reason, are becoming more clearly convinced that even the infallibility of the New Testament is no essential matter. In the words of Scott: "Once more the work of criticism has taught us to discern more surely what our religion means, in its essential message. For ages it was virtually identified with the body of teaching set forth in the New Testament, but this, as we have now discovered, was tentative at best. The writers were trying to define something for which they had no adequate language. They availed themselves of symbols and images, of traditional ideas and beliefs borrowed from current philosophies, and sought in this way to make the new faith intelligible to themselves and others. As we look back upon their work we see that it was imperfect. Their symbols, at this distance of two thousand years, have lost half their

[3]D. C. Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, pp. 132, 142.

meaning, their philosophies belong to a world of bygone thought. Christianity must not be confused with those attempts to define it which have come down to us from the New Testament writings. It consists not in formal doctrines, but in a new feeling toward God, a new attitude toward life, a condition of heart and will . . . We have learned to seek the reality of the New Testament teaching, not in its specific doctrines, but in that which lies behind them—in the moral and religious ideal which they seek to interpret . . . Our task, as we are coming to realize, is not to take over the opinions of those old teachers ready-made, but to do in our time what they did in theirs. How can we possess, with something of their intensity and fullness, the Christian spirit, and manifest it in such forms as will appeal most directly to the minds of men?"[4]

Only invincible ignorance or dogmatic bias can today accept the contents of the Bible, it would appear, at the valuation placed upon them by the founders of Protestantism. Even the illusion of divine guidance for its interpretation leads those who believe in its infallibility to opposite conclusions. The interpretation of the Spirit-guided Protestant is violently opposed to that of the Spirit-guided Papacy. Calvinist and Arminian have been known to come to blows over their differences. Episcopacy and Independency alike appeal to the same sacred oracle. From the same Book one sect will prove that all will be saved, another that few will be saved from perdition. Even on such comparatively minor matters as the form of baptism or the meaning of the Lord's Supper irreconcilable differences arise. Almost anything and everything has been "proved" by the selective quotation and manipulation of "infallible" texts, for when the authority of reason is renounced intellectual confusion begins.

Like other nations, the Hebrews attributed their laws

[4]E. F. Scott: The New Testament Today, p. 45 ff.

and customs to the commands of their own national deity, Jehovah. What the rulers said and did they said and did in his name. Acts of public policy, however atrocious, which seemed in the interest of Israel, were justified in this way as Jehovah's will. According to the traditional view, the formula, "Thus saith the Lord," should be taken at its face value as introducing an actual divine command or judgment. Whether it be the Ten Commandments or a military massacre, all alike are ascribed to a divine command. All must be taken as a story of what the Eternal God revealed or sanctioned, for in the faith of the Church the Creator of all and the Jehovah of Israel are taken to be one and the same God.

Two illustrations must suffice to show the impossibility of harmonizing this belief with modern views of the character of God.

One story is the explanation of the reason that the House of Saul was rejected by the Lord in favor of the dynasty of David. The prophet, Samuel, appears as the mouthpiece of Jehovah and commands the tribes under Saul to avenge an ancient grudge against a neighboring tribe. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, I have marked what Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself in the way, when he came out of Egypt. Now go, smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." In this campaign of revenge, the army of Saul is ordered to cut the throats of every living thing in the tribe of Amalek, in the name of the Lord, and to exterminate the tribe. Saul mingled a little mercy with his ruthlessness, at which Samuel became enraged and hewed a prisoner to pieces before the Lord and denounced the king for disobedience. For showing some clemency, when he was ordered to spare no living thing, Saul was denounced and told that, "Jehovah hath rejected thee from being

king over Israel." The specious reason given is, that to obey is better than to offer sacrifices, for which purpose the king claimed to have saved some of the captured animals—which may be true in the abstract. But to obey what? Because Saul was too merciful to obey the temper of the times—that, in the eyes of the fanatics of Israel, made him unfit to be king. He was not sufficiently subservient to a ruthless priesthood, speaking in the name of Jehovah (I Sam. xv.).

Compare this with another story. A military captain named Jehu was instigated by Elisha to head a revolt against the House of Ahab. This was the same Elisha who, when ridiculed by some small boys as "Baldhead," turned and cursed them, so that bears came out of the woods and devoured forty-two of them—a story no doubt somewhat exaggerated by the mothers of Israel to teach children the respect due to aged preachers. Jehu succeeded in seizing the seventy sons of Arab, cut off their heads and piled them at the gate of the city; then he added to his collection the skulls of all the family and friends of the king. Possibly Ahab deserved what happened to him personally, but Jehu evidently followed the notorious example of other despots in making his position secure by the massacre of all who might dispute his authority. This bloody course of action is justified as the judgment of Jehovah against the House of Ahab for disloyalty to the national religion. "And Jehovah said to Jehu—Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes and done to the House of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Yet the new ruler proved to be no improvement on the old and "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin" (II Kings xx. 7, 11, 25, 31).

In the first instance, Jehovah is said to be against

Saul and to depose his House because he disobeyed a fanatical priest in a campaign of revenge; in the other instance Jehovah is said to be pleased with Jehu and to establish his throne, because he was ruthless in exterminating a royal House and its adherents, who had been too tolerant of other religions. We are obviously reading partisan history of religious wars and persecutions as bitter and relentless as any that have disgraced Christendom. God is always represented as on the side of the winner. The fact of winning is the sign that the conduct has received the divine approval.

To the modern mind, the Bible presents itself as a very human history. We must be wary of the claim of boastful victors and their partisans, when they ascribe their triumphs to the will and acts of God. Many a foul crime has been perpetrated in the name of religion, and the Bible is not free from such shameful deeds. In stirring lines, Homer tells how the dying Patroclus defies the victorious Hector:

> "Vain boaster cease, and know the powers divine.
> Jove's and Apollo's is the deed, not thine;
> To heaven is owed whate'er your own you call,
> And heaven itself disarmed me ere my fall."

Israel, in the same spirit, attributed whatever happened to it to the will of God and the divine power. But we must not confuse mythology with history, even when we find it in the Bible.

The Bible is an outline of the amazing history of the moral and religious evolution of a great people. It recounts how, amid the conflicts and mysteries of the world they sought to discover the laws of God and the way to personal holiness and social righteousness. Their thoughts and dreams, their hopes and fears, their myths and superstitions, their blunders and controversies, their crude morality and growing idealism, their changing philosophies of life, their experiments with priests and prophets, their songs of triumph and requiems of des-

pair—and how it all turned out—during fifteen hundred years, is set down with ruthless fidelity. Such a literature is a priceless gift of warning and encouragement to all nations. The world owes the Jews a debt of gratitude which it has never honorably paid. In no other literature do we find such a matchless picture gallery of character, portraying almost every type from Cain to Christ. As a record of human history it is an incomparable work of religious genius; as an infallible and final revelation of truth it is a delusion and a snare.

Out of the welter of war and hate emerged at last the doctrine of the prophets—"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" and the teaching of Christ—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt love thy enemy also and forgive as thou dost hope to be forgiven." The discovery of these principles, enlightening the conscience and proving their supreme moral worth when put to the test, forever make it impossible to believe that the Bible is an infallible record of God's acts, commands, and purposes. The sources of the revelation of God are not to be sought in the records of Jewish myths and legends, beliefs and illusions, history and religious rites, but in the ascending life of man, of which the Bible furnishes one great installment, a revelation which is completed at last in the conviction that the Spirit of Love in the heart is the true divine Shekinah, guiding men in the paths of holiness and peace. Out of this conviction springs the faith that God is not the Jehovah of battles and massacres, but the Eternal Father, in whom we may trust, the One who has made all human blessedness depend upon obedience to the law of good will, brotherhood, and justice.

The Bible has lost all standing as an infallible revelation, among these who know its contents best, and most of its ancient prestige as a final authority for faith and

practice. The imperfect knowledge of its writers is evident on almost every page. We can no longer rely upon selected texts to prove a doctrine or settle a question beyond dispute. We approach it no longer as an infallible oracle but as a human testimony—born out of a great racial experience—that war and hatred, ritual and creed, are of little value in the world, and that "love is the fulfilling of the law" and the way to peace with God and the kingdom of heaven on earth. It is but a few pages, taken from the universal history of mankind, to show how man

> "with toil of heart and knees and hands
> Through the long gorge to the far light hath won
> His pathway upward and prevailed,
> To find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
> Are close upon the shining tablelands,
> To which our God himself is moon and sun."

"Cease then ye troubled souls," says Sabatier, "from needlessly tormenting yourselves with the belief that you are outside the religion of salvation because you vainly attempt to appropriate dogmas and beliefs against which your reason and conscience invincibly protest. And you also, souls out of conceit with faith, no longer turn away from the gospel of salvation because an intolerable theology has awakened in you disdain and contempt . . . The true gospel is the salvation of every man in distress, by enabling him trustfully to return to God. It is all the simple and profound story of the Prodigal Son."[5]

We turn now to glance for a moment at the Church in the act of establishing the Bible as an infallible standard of truth.

As already noted, the sacred literature of the Jews was taken over by the early Christians and subjected to their own methods of interpretation in order that its support might be gained for the beliefs of the new

[5]Auguste Sabatier: Religions of Authority, pp. 328, 410.

sect. In the beginning the Christian Church had no infallible oracles of its own and none were acknowledged except the Old Testament. It is not correct to think that the writers of the New Testament set themselves the task of supplementing the literature of the Jews with a new series of sacred books. Indeed, so firm was their belief that the era in which they lived would soon be ended by the Second Coming of Christ and the Great Assize, that they were sure new written standards of doctrine for future ages would not be needed. In their efforts to establish their beliefs about Christ, they made use of the Jewish oracles and the ideas they found in the current religions and philosophies. These beliefs did not remain unchanged but went through a doctrinal development, with conflicting opinions striving for mastery, and in the process great freedom of thought was permitted. As Harnack says, "The words of the Lord remained the standard for the guidance of life, and the development of doctrine pursued its course at all times, being influenced only in a secondary way by the New Testament."[6] There was first a free growth of opinions and beliefs, and only later a selection of Writings to support the beliefs that had found most favor. As Dr. Henry says, "Up to the year 165 A.D., Christianity had no need of sacred books of its own. It knew no inspired Scriptures but the oracles of the Jews."[7]

Even so, the authority of the Church but slowly availed to elevate the early Christian writings to an authority equal to that of the Old Testament. The flavor of antiquity has always been highly esteemed by those who seek inspired authority. Writers, like prophets, gain influence by being a long time dead. "Just as the early Church," says Moffatt, "with all its claim to possess in tradition the legitimate standard for interpreting the New Testament, did not assert itself an

[6]Adolf Harnack: History of Dogma, p. 93.
[7]Francis A. Henry: Jesus and the Christian Religion, p. 268.

infallible interpreter, so it never felt the need of claiming inspiration for its early versions of the sacred book . . . It was not till later that Tradition became infallible and authoritative and the Vulgate an inspired, the inspired text of the New Testament."[8]

It was not the authority of the New Testament which controlled the formation of the dogmatic system of the Church; it was the authority of the Church which controlled the formation of a group of writings selected for use as a textbook of instruction. In an atmosphere of free thought and discussion, influenced by the current beliefs and traditions of the period, the dogmas of the Church were established by majority vote in the Councils of the Church. The Church had been deluged with floods of writings, many of which have perished, and from these were selected and edited those that were esteemed most useful in supporting the dogmas agreed upon. "The Church," says Cardinal Gibbons, "in the plenitude of her authority, in the third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), separated the wheat from the chaff, and declared what books are Canonical."[9] From this fact, the Romanist argues that we cannot establish the inspiration of the books selected without first admitting the inspiration of the Church which selected them. The Church created the Bible, not the Bible the Church. If an external and infallible authority is required by men, the proper place to look for it is in the Church, as the Romanists claim. When that claim is rejected, there is no more reason for believing in the infallible and inspired authority of a letter of Paul than in the authority and inspiration of "The Shepherd of Hermas" or "The Teaching of the Twelve."

The theology of the early Church was the product of the philosophy and opinions of those composing the Church, and the writings chosen for instruction were

[8]James Moffatt: The Approach to the New Testament, p. 110.
[9]Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, p. 104.

naturally chosen for their usefulness, when interpreted by current methods, in supporting that theology. Those that lent themselves most readily to the interpretations that would support the prevailing beliefs of the period, were thus given supremacy over others. As Dr. Smith says, "The New Testament writings themselves are the products of theological interests. They reflect the ideas of the first century."[10] In the same way, their interpretation to support dominant beliefs reflects the theological interests of the fourth century, which presided over their selection for the purpose. The Nicene Creed was adopted in A.D. 325, as an expression of the religious philosophy of the time, but "Not till the festal letter of Athanasius in the year 367 shall we find the list of books we have in our New Testament anywhere set forth without addition or omission. Councils endorsed the list, but centuries elapsed before Greek and Latin Churches concurred in it."[11]

Whenever these popular beliefs were contested by dissenters, what was needed to maintain their authority? "All that was needed," says Moffatt, "was the growing Tradition of the Church, which became more and more dogmatic, and which merely needed Scriptures assumed to be inspired, in order to deduce any truth that had to be put forward."[12] The needed Scriptures were in time selected to support the theology of growing dogmatic tradition. Then the Church went further. "She drew up," continues Moffatt, "a brief statement of Christian truth to guide people in understanding what the New Testament really meant; the Tradition safeguarded believers in their reading of the Bible. She put teaching more and more under the supervision of the bishops, as the representatives of apostolic orthodoxy, when schools of Christian teachers and thinkers became dangerous. And she encouraged the allegorical method of interpre-

[10] G. B. Smith. A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion, p. 528.
[11] ibid., 227.

tation, in order to avoid some awkward difficulties raised by the literal text."[12] Thus the authority of the Bible was made to rest upon the authority of the Church, which dictated both what writings should be esteemed as inspired and infallible, and what was the proper meaning that should be attached to their words. In seeking to retain the infallible authority of Scriptures thus selected and interpreted, while denying the inspired authority that selected and interpreted them, Protestants are like those who would approve a building as perfect while denouncing the architect as a fool. The only logical position to take is to recognize that both Church and writings are the work of fallible men, who worked and taught according to their honest thought, but with whom, however, modern men cannot always honestly agree.

The dogmatic bias presiding over the whole process employed to supply documentary authority for popular traditions may be shown in various ways. For example, in the last half of the fourth century, Jerome translated the Greek New Testament into Latin, and at I John v. 7 introduced the famous verse, which became one of the chief proofs of the dogma of the Trinity: "For there are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." For a thousand years this passage remained practically undisputed and served its purpose. Then Erasmus declared the passage to be spurious, and all modern scholars agree with him. There are only two Greek manuscripts in which the words are found and hundreds from which they are absent. They have been omitted from all modern versions of the Bible. Yet they served for centuries to rivet a dogma into the system of the Church, and make it part of what was called a divine revelation. In Matt. xxviii. 19, Jesus is said to have commissioned his disciples "in the name of the Father, the Son and

[12]James Moffatt: The Approach to the New Testament, pp. 107, 106.

the Holy Ghost." The learned Eusebius, in a score of passages, written before the year 325 A.D., quotes the text as "make disciples in my name," omitting the familiar baptismal formula. The plain inference is that the passage was interpolated to give support to the dogma of the Trinity, then taking shape in the minds of theologians. It was of prime importance for disciples who claimed that Jesus was the Messiah, to prove that he was a descendant of David. This descent through Joseph, his father, was proven by his genealogy. The Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, dated about 200 A.D., says that "Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat Jesus, who is called the Messiah." When this paternity ceased to be useful for later theological purposes, that part of the passage was excised from later manuscripts issued under orthodox authority. In the somewhat different genealogy given by Luke, it is said, "And Jesus himself being the son of Joseph," but the words "as was supposed" are entered in parenthesis (Lk. iii. 23). Modern scholars are doubtless right in claiming that "The words are perhaps from a later hand than that which first compiled the pedigree."[13]

The conclusion of Conybeare thus seems to be warranted: "Our Greek texts, not only of the Gospels, but of the Epistles as well, have been revised and interpolated by orthodox copyists. We can trace the perversion of the text in a few cases, with the aid of patristic citations and ancient versions. But there must remain many passages which have been so corrected but where to-day we cannot expose the fraud."[14] The men who framed the Creeds to express their beliefs, selected and edited documents, which by their system of interpretation would best support them. The doctrinal tradition took precedence over the documentary evidence. The Bible fails as an infallible authority for the Creeds,

[13]Peake's Commentary on the Bible, pp. 701, 728.
[14]F. C. Conybeare: History of New Testament Criticism, p. 77.

as much as the Creeds fail as an infallible authority for the Bible, and as much as any spiritual experience in the twentieth century fails to prove the virgin birth or physical resurrection of Jesus.

In the work of selecting sacred documents to serve as authority for beliefs that had developed, there arose great differences of opinion. Irenaeus left out of his Bible the Letter of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jude and I Peter; but he included the Epistle of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas. Clement of Alexandria admitted into his Bible the Preaching of Peter, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and the Traditions of Matthias. The learned Origen accepted the authority of the Teaching of the Twelve, the Epistle of Clement, and the Epistle of Barnabas. The great Eusebius was certain that the Book of Revelation was not inspired. The Sinaitic Codex, which is the oldest manuscript of the New Testament, contains the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. The Alexandrine Codex includes the First and Second Letters of Clement. The Synod of Laodicea ruled out the Book of Revelation and the Synod of Carthage ruled in the Acts of the Martyrs. In Alexandria, the Epistle of Clement, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Teaching of the Twelve were received as equal in authority with the Letters of Paul. In Rome, the Revelation of Peter was held in the same esteem. The Syrian Church refused to accept II Peter, Jude, and II and III John, but accepted III Corinthians. No finality was reached as to what should constitute "The Word of God" until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, when the Roman Church admitted some books which Protestants still refuse to accept as inspired. Hence it will be seen that anyone who really believes in the existence of an infallible revelation will have some difficulty in locating all of it.

At the Council of Trent, the whole subject of what the Bible should contain was reviewed by the prelates

of the Church. The Reformers had appealed to the Scriptures against the Church, but what constituted the Scriptures and how did they gain authority? Was not the Church the supreme authority to decide what documents were inspired and what were not? As Froude says, "The longer the fathers considered the less they could see the way, and they concluded naturally that the Vulgate must stand as it was. There was reasonable certainty that the Spirit which had dictated the original had dictated the translation. Now, it was ingeniously argued that the Council then sitting was confessedly inspired. The Council had but to approve the Vulgate and the Vulgate would be inspired. The reasoning had the merit of dispensing with further inquiry."[15]

The historical process by which an external, infallible authority can be set up thus becomes clear. The prelates of the Church assumed the infallibility of their own judgment in stating Christian dogmas and in selecting inspired documents and the method of interpretation to support the dogmas. As Wernle says, "It is not the words of Jesus or the letters of Paul, which are our final court of appeal, but the thoughts of ecclesiastics, who selected the words of Jesus and the letters of Paul, together with writings of a later date to form the Canon of Scriptures."[16] And in the process of selection, elimination, and editing, who can tell what valuable writings were suppressed or altered by alternately victorious parties, in an effort to extinguish opinions they opposed?

The net result was indecisive. Not even the power of the Papal Church was able to create an indisputable sacred anthology with the proper marks of infallibility. The more the Bible is studied the more apparent become the evidences of its natural, human origin. As from the Old Testament the divine sanction of slavery, polygamy, massacres, blood sacrifices, and mythical explanations of

[15] J. A. Froude: Lectures on the Council of Trent, p. 206.
[16] Paul Wernle: Beginnings of Christianity, II, p. 347.

events—so from the New Testament—beliefs in demon possession, the Fall of Adam, the impending end of the world, expectations that Jesus would be the Jewish Messiah to save the nation from their enemies, and fragments of obsolete philosophies and mythologies, emerge to confound the modern reader. They represent the varying opinions and customs of men during many centuries. And the action of the Church in establishing such a collection as an authority, alleged to be infallible, really settled nothing but the ability of Christians to differ in opinions on these subjects.

Modern scholarship vindicates the conclusion of Theodore Parker: "But modern criticism is fast breaking in pieces this idol which men have made of the Scriptures. It has shown that here are the most different works thrown together; that their authors, wise as they sometimes were, had only the inspiration which is common to other men equally wise and pious; that they were by no means infallible, but mistaken in facts and reasoning, uttering predictions which time has not fulfilled; men who in some measure partook of the darkness and limited notions of their age, and were not always above its mistakes and corruptions."[17] "Men have found," says Dr. Vedder, "by bitter experience that the Pope is not infallible, that the Bible is not infallible, that Christian consciousness is not infallible. Fallibility, we must conclude, is an inescapable limitation of humanity, inseparable from the possession of finite powers. Even divine inspiration cannot infuse infallibility into the human mind."[18]

Abundant evidence in support of this conclusion may be found in a multitude of books devoted to the subject, the works of reverent scholars. Space does not here permit even an outline of it. It might, however, be observed that no one is competent to express an

[17]Theodore Parker: The Transient and Permanent in Christianity, p. 14.
[18]Henry C. Vedder: The Fundamentals of Christianity, p. 34.

intelligent opinion on this subject until he has, at least, studied carefully a reasonable amount of this evidence.

In the retreat from the indefensible position of Fundamentalist extremists, some take refuge in a theory of limited infallibility. It is said that the Bible writers were inspired to the extent that they were theologically infallible but not scientifically so. "We affirm," said Briggs, "that they were infallible on all matters of divine revelation, in things wherein men need an infallible revelation from God . . . We do not claim that the writer of the poem of creation knew geology or astronomy better than the experts of modern science. They are authentic for their purpose to determine every question of religion, doctrine or morals."[19] Even such a concession to modern scholarship secured for the writer the honor of being pronounced a heretic by his church.

This theory of partial inspiration, which has become popular, passes with many as extremely progressive and liberal. Acting upon it, one permits himself the liberty of selecting such passages from the Bible as he believes to be true and says, "this is the infallible Word of God," while the others that offend him are set aside as vitiated by the human element of error.

When historical or scientific errors embarrass the reader who has been taught to expect in the Bible inspired and infallible truth, he is told, "All such difficulties are overcome as soon as it is recognised that by the nature of the case God was compelled to accommodate Himself to the condition of those with whom He had to do. It was impossible in the childhood of the race that such knowledge of God could be received as was possible at its maturity."[20] "It follows," says Dr. Samuel Harris, "that the higher revelations of God must be delayed till man becomes competent to receive

[19]C. A. Briggs: The Bible, the Church and the Reason, p. 94.
[20]Marcus Dods: The Bible, p. 85.

them. A child cannot be taught problems in proportion and compound interest before it has learned addition. It is impossible to reveal the construction of an electric telegraph and steam engine to the lowest savage. In like manner, God's revelation must adapt itself to the receptivity of the people, consequently it must be progressive. Missionaries to savage tribes find difficulty in communicating to them the Christian ideas of spiritual purity and holiness. In this progressive way the revelation of God recorded in the Christian scriptures was in fact made."[21]

If that be the case, may we not suppose that such a process of revelation continues to be progressive with advancing civilization and culture? Who has any authority for declaring that it has ever ceased? If the religious knowledge of the first century A.D. rendered obsolete the religious knowledge of the eighth century B.C., may not the religious knowledge of the twentieth century render obsolete that of the first century?

Such a theory overlooks the fact that it represents the Almighty as teaching or sanctioning what is false or wrong in deference to the ignorance or wickedness of His pupils. We do not begin to reveal the truth of the higher mathematics by permitting children to imagine that two plus two make five. And the Christian missionary would be sadly lacking in pedagogic skill, if not in moral character, who would commence his teaching by urging the members of the savage tribe to whom he was sent, to obey their impulse to massacre their neighbors, as Jehovah is alleged to have done with Israel. If Christ had the right idea of God, it is inconceivable that God would have commenced His revelation of truth by expressing His pleasure in the steaming blood of gory altars, on which innocent victims were immolated to avert His wrath.

This theory lacks all warrant for assuming that ancient nations had not the capacity to receive the same teach-

[21]Samuel Harris: The Self-Revelation of God, p. 68.

ing that is offered to modern nations. Was not Moses as capable of learning the great antiquity of the human race as the school children who are now taught that truth? Who can doubt the ability of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, Hindu, or Greek thinkers to comprehend as well as the pupils of a modern Sunday School the doctrines of the Christian catechism, if they had been presented to them as a revelation from God? Were the Greeks of the age of Pericles, or the Hebrews of the time of Solomon, incapable of assimilating the gospel now so confidently propagated by the churches among Hindu pariahs, Hottentots, and South Sea Islanders? Was Isaiah less able to understand the Sermon on the Mount than Peter? To excuse the scientific, historical, or theological defects of the Bible on the ground that God was unable to impart the principles of the higher religion or more modern knowledge to ancient peoples is merely the sophistry of special pleading. We can only conclude that a supernatural method of revealing truth to men of Israel was not on the divine program. Men were left to discover the truth by experience and to perfect their religion and morals by a natural process, then as now. A theory that modern chemistry is the result of an infallible and progressive revelation would be as true an account of the rise of that science as to speak of the supernatural revelation of religious truth.

This theory claims that God starts with error to lead a chosen race of men into an exclusive revelation of truth. It asks us to believe that inspired men were not preserved from error in regard to this world and its history where their statements might be verified or disproved, but were supernaturally guarded from error when they spoke of events outside this world which can be neither verified nor disproved. They might be wrong about the creation of the universe in six days or the experiences of Adam in Eden, but they were infallible in their knowledge of such matters as the intentions of

Deity, the Second Coming of Christ, or the need of blood sacrifices to appease God. They might be wrong in believing that God actually commanded exterminating massacres but they could reveal the metaphysical constitution of the nature of the Almighty. They might be wrong about witchcraft and demons, but they must be right about the preëxistence of Christ. They might blunder in their references to the past history of their nation, but they were infallibly informed about the future destiny of all mankind. An inspiration which leaves natural ignorance in worldly matters so obviously uncorrected is of dubious value in regard to supramundane affairs. Had God proposed to Himself to make a supernatural revelation, He might have caused certain documents to be written in which no statement would be made that mankind would afterward discover to be an error. Such a miracle was surely not beyond His power. How much more convincing it would have been than the actual credentials offered—such as God's appearance on Mount Sinai, the dividing of the Red Sea before Israel, turning water into wine, and ordering demons into swine—events whose occurrence later generations might reasonably doubt. Such a literature, standing the test of the ages, in conflict with no truth that men would thereafter discover, would have indeed been a clear and infallible guide to all the dark mysteries of life. The fact that there is no such set of documents in existence is evidence that an infallible revelation was not intended, but that men are left to the guidance of the Inner Light and the use of their own faculties in making their way from ignorance to knowledge in religion and morals, as in science, and in this process they develop the godlike powers within them.

"Nobody would ever have thought of partial inspiration," said Goldwin Smith, "except as an expedient to cover retreat. We do but tamper with our understandings and consciences by such attempts at once to hold

and let go, to retain the shadow of belief when the substance has passed away. Far better is it, whatever it may cost, honestly to admit that the sacred books of the Jews, granting their superiority to the sacred books of other nations, are like the sacred books of other nations, the works of men and not of God . . . Semi-inspiration is a subterfuge and nothing more."[22]

The Bible, according to the faith of modern heresy, is one of the noblest products of the moral evolution of mankind, not the documented record of ideas supernaturally revealed by heaven. Let us neither blame the Almighty for our blunders nor credit the angels with our discoveries. Progress in the discovery of new truth concerning God and man and nature has never ceased, and still continues its steady elimination of old superstitions and delusions with the growing knowledge of all truth. The Bible of the race, as Emerson said, will not be completed until the last great man is born.

Many of the old beliefs and dogmas will be swept away in the progress of man and be forgotten; the human origin of the Bible will be as frankly admitted as is that of the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita; but the spiritual achievements of the Hebrew race, which produced a Moses, an Isaiah, a Christ, a Paul, a John, will abide as an imperishable testimony to the truth that faith, hope, and love, justice and holiness, are the indispensable conditions of all human welfare and happiness.

"Because it thus takes us close to the realities of religion," says Scott, "the New Testament has more to give us than if it was an infallible guide to doctrine . . . The modern inquiry has indeed made us more than ever doubtful of the traditional forms of Christianity, from which in any case the age has broken away. But it has brought us a far clearer insight into their inner significance. We feel again, as men felt in the primitive age, that what Christ gave was not a creed or system, but a regenerating spirit."[23]

[22]Goldwin Smith: Guesses at the Riddle of Existence, p. 94.
[23]E. F. Scott: The New Testament Today, p. 88.

CHAPTER X

SCIENCE, MYTHOLOGY, AND RELIGION

"As the forehead of Man grows broader,
So do his creeds;
And his gods they are shaped in his image,
And mirror his needs; . . . .
And, mixed with his trust there is terror,
And, mixed with his madness is ruth,
And every man grovels in error,
And every man glimpses a truth."

DON MARQUIS.

Modern men regard all that goes on in nature as the result of interweaving forces, out of whose endless combinations and transmutations evolve new forms of being and of beauty. Primitive men, on the other hand, viewed "the growth and decay of vegetation, the birth and growth of living creatures, as the effects of the waxing and waning strength of divine beings, of gods and goddesses, who were born and died, married and begot children, on the pattern of human life."[1]

Mythology thus became the mother of philosophy and religion. "The same mighty power of imagination," says Fiske, "which now restrained and guided by scientific principles, leads to scientific discoveries and inventions, must then have run wildly riot in mythologic fictions, whereby to explain the phenomena of nature." "Mythology is a rudimentary cosmic philosophy."[2]

Moore tells us that in old Egypt, "The gods are in the main the great powers of nature which affect human welfare, or objects and phenomena in which these powers are manifested, the bright sky, the enlivening sun, the rosy dawn, the storm that brings the longed-for rain. Of

[1]J. G. Frazer: Adonis, Attis and Osiris, p. 3.
[2]John Fiske: Myths and Myth-Makers, p. 18; Cosmic Philosophy, II, p. 349.

course, it was not the natural object or phenomenon as such that was worshiped, but a power actuated by a will and prompted by motives, such as actuate human conduct, and conceived as spirit."[3] It was the same story in Greece. "The Homeric man could not conceive of a natural world obeying laws whose operations are fixed; on the contrary, he could only think of animated beings as the cause of events. For him every occurrence was the manifestation of some divinity; the natural and the miraculous were one."[4] Idols were the visible symbols of these unseen powers and pictured their characters. Mythology humanized the universe by imagining it to be the conflict of persons such as men knew themselves to be; science mechanizes the universe by reading there the ceaseless interactions of impersonal energies.

In the imagination of the ancient Greeks, "Every phenomenon of nature, night and rosy-fingered dawn, earth and sun, winds, rivers and seas, sleep and death, all have been transformed into divine and conscious agents, to be propitiated with prayer, interpreted by divination, and comprehended by passions and desires identical with those which stir and control mankind."[5] "The history of religion," says Carpenter, "is concerned with the process by which the great gods rise into clear view above the host of spirits filling the common scene; with the modes by which the forces of the world are grouped under their control; with the manifold combinations which finally enable one supreme power to absorb all the rest, so that a god of the sky, like the Greek Zeus, may become the god of the rain and sunshine and atmospheric change and of the nether world, and may thus be presented as the sole and original energy, not only of all outward things but also of the inner world of thought."[6]

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[3]George F. Moore: History of Religion, I, p. 247.
[4]C. H. Moore: Religious Thought of Greece, p. 19.
[5]G. Lowes Dickinson: The Greek View of Life, p. 7.
[6]J. Estlin Carpenter: Comparative Religion, p. 101 ff.

The method of mythology was rational, but the data out of which it framed its vast conceptions and epic poetry were defective. The forces operating in all things and the laws governing their causative activities were still unknown. The events which we ascribe to the forces of nature were credited to the activities of the spirits of nature, who were thought to possess conscious self-direction within their respective domains, and to be capable of changing purposes like men. The great religions of the world arose during the ages of mythology and inherit many of the conceptions then current. Most of the conflicts between religion and science have been conflicts between the modern scientific interpretations of events and the ancient mythological interpretations, which became embodied in religion. The Genesis story of creation is mythological; the evolutionary account is scientific. To attribute physical and moral evils to demons is mythology; to explain them in terms of physiology and psychology is scientific. Progressive Christianity is an attempt to shift the support of the doctrines of religion from a mythological to a scientific basis.

Though science discover forces which automatically produce their invariable consequences according to the laws of nature, still the human mind pursues its quest for the great First Cause, whose Will is the fountain of all energy and whose Mind is the source of all law. "We cannot," says Pringle-Pattison, "as philosophers, rest in any principle short of that which we name the Absolute or God. All experience might not be unfitly described, from the human side, as the quest for God—the progressive attempt, through living and knowing, to reach a true conception of the Power whose nature is revealed in all that is."[7] In antiquity this quest, with a few exceptions, ended in the conception of a plurality of Powers living in the phenomena of the

[7] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God, p. 156.

universe; these have now become forces in motion, whose uniformity of action manifest the inviolate will of One Supreme Mind. By the scientific method we may learn and systematize the facts concerning these forces and the laws of their action and reasonably infer their origin in God. "The Christian scholar," says a recent writer, "looked up with joy and amazement, saying, "Why this invisible, purposeful energy in Nature is simply what God is thinking, feeling and doing . . . Nature is Will in action. God continually purposes all these energies and they go forth. Light-energy, and other beautiful forces constituting Nature are the modes of God's continuous Will."[8]

Ancient Jew and Gentile followed the same path of reasoning to personalize the invisible Powers upon whose good will the life and happiness of men depended. The fault we may find with their religious beliefs is due, not to their lack of good reasoning, but to the inaccuracy of their science. They had not all the facts before them. We can become their intellectual equals only as, like them, we bring our religious beliefs into harmony with our scientific knowledge. Their mythologies explained the world as it appeared to them; but they do not explain the world as it is known to us. To sanctify their beliefs as divine revelations is like making the childish fancies of the kindergarten serve as a system of truth for a university.

A changed view of the universe necessitates a changed view of God and his methods. To-day men must say with Dr. Gordon, that which the facts in hand did not enable them to say, when the Bible was written: "Law is the speech of God . . . The order of Nature is his speech; its laws are the idioms of his tongue; its fixed ways are the stedfast manner of his language; and in and through this instrument he discovers to the religious soul his mind and heart . . . Since God is in every

[8]R. LaRue Swain: What and Where is God?, p. 65.

mode of action in the cosmos and in man . . . since his intelligent will is the ground of the cosmos and all its phases; since his conscience is the conscience of man; what room is there for miracle and what need?"[9]

So also wrote a great American, who was libelled by his enemies when they charged him with being an atheist: "The Word of God is the Creation we behold, and it is this Word, which no human invention can counterfeit or altar, that God speaks universally to man. The Almighty Lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited men to study and imitation. It is as if He said to the inhabitants of the globe, 'I have made the earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts . . . He can now provide for his own comfort and learn from my munificence to all to be kind to each other.'"[10]

The old mythologies have become poetic fictions; but the modern sciences provide the religious imagination with nobler themes. "There is a holiness about science," said Paul Carus, "which is rarely appreciated either by priests or scientists. Scientific truth is not profane. It is sacred. There are not two antagonistic truths, one religious and the other scientific. There is but one truth, which is discovered by scientific methods and applied to our religious life. Truth is one, and the recognition of truth is the basis of all true religion."[11] As ancient religions were based on a spiritual interpretation of ancient science, so modern religion should be based on a spiritual interpretation of modern sciences.

As Alfred Noyes has written:

> " . . . What is all science, then,
> But pure religion, seeking everywhere
> The true commandments, and through many forms
> The eternal power that binds all worlds in one?
> It is man's age-long struggle to draw near

[9]George A. Gordon: Religion and Miracle, p. 142, 165.
[10]Thomas Paine: The Age of Reason, pp. 27. 35.
[11]Paul Carus: The Religion of Science, p. 8.

His maker, learn His thoughts, discern His law—
A boundless task, in whose infinitude,
As in the unfolding light and law of love,
Abides our hope, and our eternal joy."

The antagonism between modern science and traditional Christianity has been largely due to the stubbornness of the Church in clinging to ancient Hebrew beliefs as divine revelations. Instead of consenting to regard these beliefs to be a natural development of thought during the myth-making age, they have been exalted as divine truth, not subject to revision or correction. To Progressive Christianity it now appears that religious and ethical thought passed through the same phases of evolution in Israel as in other nations, but attained a richer and nobler development in a lofty monotheism and high spiritual ideals, which merged with other religious and intellectual elements of the Greco-Roman world to produce Christianity. That which is true and permanent in this heritage from the past we gratefully receive, but it needs to be freed from the swaddling clothes of ancient mythologies and allied with scientific methods in order to function effectively in the modern world.

Looking backward, we note that not alone in Israel but also in many other nations some religious geniuses were able to rise above the crude mythologies and superstitions of the masses to belief in the Supreme One, by whom all things exist, and in a Moral Order, which is the expression of a Divine Righteousness. In Egypt the populace believed that the events of the world revealed the actions of many gods, but there were individuals like Amen-hotep, the heretic king, who had inscribed on his tomb the words, "God is One and Alone, and there is none other but Him. God in One, the One that has made all things. God is the Father of gods. God is compassionate to all those who fear Him and hears those who cry unto Him."[12]

The later poets and philosophers of Greece ridiculed

[12] W. A. Budge: The Dwellers of the Nile, p. 130.

the polytheism cherished by the people, and shattered the foundations of Olympus. Like the Hebrew prophets they beheld the reign of One Supreme and Righteous God, variously named by the different peoples. "There is one God," said Xenophanes, "greatest among gods and men, not like mortals in form or thought." To Aristotle, this One was "the First Cause, pure Thought, God, conscious, eternal, good. The order of the universe bears witness to a Mind which sets it in order and keeps it in motion, all for intelligent ends."[13] "The Zeus of Homer, whose superiority, as we saw, was based on physical force, under the hands of Aeschylus, grows into something akin to the Jewish Jehovah."[14]

Above the innumerable gods of popular mythology, the seers of India beheld the One, who is the Ruler and Lover of all. He may be worshiped under many names but forever transcends all human conceptions of Him. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the incarnate Krishna formulates this thought: "I am the Creator of the universe. All objects of the universe depend on me and are sustained by me, even as precious gems depend on the thread that passeth through them. The truth is that men worship many gods and images and hold many conceptions of deity, yet doth their faith arise from a latent and unfolding faith in me, in worshiping these forces and conceptions they wish to worship me, though they know it not."[15] By many, God was conceived as the immanent Brahman out of whose life all things spring as transient blossoms. "The Upanishads declare that the universe is in God," says Radhakrishnan, "but they never declare that the universe is God. God is greater than the universe, which is his work. They refuse to imprison God in the world . . . The One is revealed in the existence of the world."[16]

[13]C. H. Moore: Religious Thought of the Greeks, p. 173.
[14]G. Lowes Dickinson: The Greek View of Life, p. 50.
[15]Bhagavad Gita: Part VII.
[16]S. Radhakrishnan: Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp. 44, 79.

Among the Semitic nations, including the Hebrews, a similar development of religious thought took place. Powers inhabiting physical objects were known as "ba'alim," which meant that each "ba'al" must be recognized as the owner of the thing in which he dwelt or which he controlled. There were ba'alim of the heavens and the earth; they resided in stars, in springs, soils, trees, and mountains. The lesser gods served the higher. Each nation also believed that the supreme Lord of its own territory was the Lord of lords. The prowess of their gods furnished nations with themes of patriotic poetry and song. The more philosophic merged the minor deities into the One mysterious Power, of which they all are local manifestations. "When the progress of astronomy," says Cumont, "removed the constellations to incommensurable distances, the 'Baal of Heaven' had to grow in majesty. Thus a clergy of astronomers necessarily conceived 'Baal, the Lord of the Heavens' as 'Master of Eternity' or 'He whose name is praised through all eternity'—titles which constantly recur in Semitic inscriptions. . . . The various deities were nothing but different aspects under which the supreme and infinite being manifested itself."[17]

The literary fragments of the Old Testament record the slow evolution of religious thought in Israel beginning in this early mythology and ending in the ethical monotheism of the prophets. It is the history of the rise of Jahweh (Jehovah) to supremacy over all the gods and ba'alim within the Hebrew territory, through the absorption of their powers and the extinction finally of belief in the existence of any other God but the One, whom the Hebrews called the God of Israel. As in other nations monotheism developed out of the popular mythology.

As Moore has shown, from the time of Moses Jehovah was the champion of Israel in war, but the ba'alim were

[17]Franz Cumont: Oriental Religions, p. 118 ff.

the gods of the soil. Only slowly did the sole and exclusive worship of Jehovah supersede the worship of the other gods.[18] "The Hebrews as a people," says Hopkins, "were reluctant to worship one god exclusively and it never occurred to them that there were no other gods than their own. They perpetually reverted to the polytheistic attitude."[19] "The oldest tradition of Israel," writes Eerdmans, "was polytheistic. People believed in the existence of many unseen powers, and among these gods, Jahweh, the national god, the god of rain, storm, clouds, thunder and lightning, was only one. But not all that happened to men was done by Jahweh."[20] For five hundred years after Moses, as Montefiore shows, "men appear to have fully recognized the existence of other independent divinities outside and beyond Israel. . . It is not said in the decalogue, 'There is no god but Jahweh' but for the Israelite beside Jahweh there shall be no other god. . .But if in the pre-prophetic period Israelites believed frankly in the existence of other gods besides their own, the supremacy of Jahweh was as unquestioned by them as the supremacy of Chemosh was doubtless unquestioned by the Moabites."[21]

As other nations had their priests and seers to whom their gods revealed their will, so also had Israel. "And Jehovah said unto Noah," or "Jehovah spake unto Moses," were expressions of this popular faith. "The pagan poets," says Santayana, "when they devised a myth, half believed it as a fact. What lent some truth, —moral truth only—to their imaginations was the beauty of nature, the comedy of life, or the groans of mankind, crushed between the upper and nether millstones; but being scientifically ignorant they allowed their pictorial wisdom to pass for a revealed science, for a physics of the unseen. If even among the pagans the

[18]George F. Moore: History of Religions, II, p. 7 ff.
[19]E. W. Hopkins: Origin and Evolution of Religion, p. 282.
[20]B. D. Eerdmans: Art. in the Hibbert Journal, July, 1909.
[21]C. G. Montefiore: Religion of the Ancient Hebrews, p. 35 ff.

poetic expression of human experience could be mistaken for knowledge of occult existences, how much more must this have been the case among a more ignorant and more intense nation like the Jews."[22]

In the mythology of the period, Jahweh was acknowledged as the political head of Israel and the defender of any territory, which could be wrested from other gods and their worshipers. He was the god of the federated tribes. Neglect of his altar meant a divided allegiance, tribal disunity, weakness and danger. Hence loyalty to Jahweh was loyalty to the tribal commonwealth. He, the powerful god of Sinai, had graciously taken Israel under his protection and shown his greatness by the manner of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Hence gratitude was made a motive for loyalty. According to Joshua, the people had anciently served other gods, but ascribing their deliverance to Jahweh of Sinai, he commanded, "Put away the gods which your fathers served and serve ye Jahweh" (Josh. xxiv.).

The manner of their deliverance from bondage is described in the best mythological style of the time. The writers identify the god who accomplished it with the one who had appeared to Abraham and promised to him the whole land of Canaan as the inheritance of his posterity. Here a strong tribal desire is justified by crediting it to the divine will. That the Canaanites should object to dispossession by the order of Jahweh is sufficient evidence of their wickedness and reason for their extermination. History tells of political disasters which weakened Egypt at the time and made the revolt of alien slaves successful, but to Jahweh was given the credit and the glory. When deliverance had been won, it is said that Jahweh appeared on the mountain-top with thunder and lightning, and invited Moses and the elders to come up and meet him, and there they saw him and held a sacred feast. Hearing of all that had hap-

[22]George Santayana: Winds of Doctrine, pp. 33–39.

pened, Jethro, chief of the Kenites, the old worshipers of Jahweh, piously exclaimed, "Blessed be Jahweh, who hath delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians. Now I know that Jahweh is greater than all gods" (Exod. xviii. 11). The greatness of a god was measured by the victories won by his worshipers.

The help of this powerful deity was sought in every national crisis. He was reputed to be a famous fighter. He was no "prince of peace," though much popular theology still identifies him with the preëxistent Christ. Hymns praised him as a "man of war." The leaders incited the people by crying, "Fear not nor tremble nor be affrighted, for Jahweh, your god, is he that goeth before you to fight for you against your enemies." The enemies of Israel were the enemies of Jahweh, because they worshiped other gods and he was "a jealous God." Commands to massacre men, women, and children, who served other gods, were said to emanate from him. His throne could be made secure only by butchering the worshipers of his rivals. Subsequent apologists glossed over these atrocities by saying they were a just retribution on the other tribes for their wickedness, thereby furnishing sacred texts for any robbery or war, for they can all be condoned by the same plea. We read the chronicles of the conquerors, but the conquered might have a different tale, could we but learn their versions of the same events. For centuries, on their own confession, the conquerors showed little, if any, moral improvement over the civilization they had crushed. With a naïve touch of hypocrisy, their spokesmen blame their sins on the bad influence of the remnant of the enemy people who had not been butchered.

Many of the customs and beliefs concerning the local deities he displaced were assimilated into the cult of Jahweh. In the ancient mingling of peoples, Smith has shown that, "Sometimes two gods were of themselves fused into one, as when the mass of Israelites in their

local worship of Jehovah identified him with the Baalim of the Canaanite high places, and carried over into His worship the ritual of the Canaanite shrines, not deeming that in so doing they were less truly Jehovah worshipers than before."[23] "The religion of the northern agricultural tribes," we are told, "was in practice a thinly disguised Canaanite agricultural religion. The name Jahweh was commonly used, but the deity in question was primarily a composite of Baal, Astarte and Adonis. Jahweh was endowed with practically all the powers and attributes of this Canaanite trinity and was expected to discharge practically the same functions and confer the same agricultural blessings. The old Canaanite shrines became the centers of this composite Jahweh-cult."[24]

Once having attributed the victories of the tribes to the leadership and warlike ability of Jahweh, the Jewish leaders exalt him above the gods of other nations and boast of his power. The law said that Israel must not worship "the host of heaven" for Jahweh had made these to be "the gods of all the peoples." The psalmist sings, "O give thanks to the God of gods." "There is none like thee among the gods, O Jehovah" (Psa. cxxxvi. 2; lxxxvi. 8). "Thou art exalted above all gods," was the national chant. "For Jahweh, your god is God of gods and Lord of lords," cried a patriot (Psa. xcvi. 9; Deut. x. 17). "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment," was the explanation accepted by Israel of the escape from that land. When the king of Ammon protested against the invasion of his territory, Jephthah, the Jewish leader, answered, "Wilt thou not take possession of that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Jahweh, our god, hath dispossessed, them will we possess" (Judg. xi.). Underneath this is the ruthless argument that might makes right, for the god has so willed it. Victory adds glory

[23]W. Robertson Smith: The Religion of the Semites, p. 39.
[24]Julian Morgenstern: Art. in the Journal of Religion, May, 1921.

to the victor's god and proves his right to rule. In these old mythologies, the people acknowledge the territorial rights of all the gods only so far as the gods can defend them with the valor of their worshipers. Outside his own territory, however, a god is powerless, unless his worshipers and retainers successfully invade the land and thereby establish his rule. When David was driven into exile he felt that he was banished from the territory of Jahweh, which meant to him, "Go serve other gods" (I Sam. xxvi. 19).

In these old narratives and songs we have the witness of an ancient people interpreting their history by the mythological method common to their times. By the great prophets, however, God is given a higher moral character than that of the tribal Jahweh and the old superstitions about him are rebuked. In the words of Mathews, "If, as in the case of classical mythology, gods are past reformation, they are pensioned off with conventional honors and allowed to pass into innocuous desuetude on some mountain where their example will not injure the morals of young people. In the extent of this moral idealism of its idea of God, the Hebrew religion is unique. It seems to have passed through the earlier stages of religious evolution, but as in no other religion did it eventuate in a monarch of absolute righteousness, hating inquity. That this was the case was due to the work of the prophets who, from an exceptional religious experience, taught an unwilling nation ideals that were to serve as the basis of the non-monarchical ethical religion of Jesus."[25]

In this process, however, the gods do not disappear entirely from the scene. They remain either in revolt against the one true God, as evil spirits or demons, or are employed in his service as angelic messengers. This use for the old gods contained the seeds of that monstrous growth of mythological superstition, which has

[25]Shailer Mathews: Contributions of Science to Religion, p. 365.

cursed the world until recent times. Most of the gods of the heathen remained in popular Hebrew theology as demons, and Satan, "the god of this world," was their leader. The old warfare between Jahweh and the other gods now became a conflict between God and the demons. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice," said Paul, "they sacrifice to demons and not to God." And some sections of the Christian Church still cling to this picture of the moral evolution of mankind as a true description of what goes on behind the worldly scenes. Christ and the angels are arrayed in opposition to Satan and the demons, in this mythology, while the Virgin and the saints have their places in the cosmic conflict.

In old Israel, Jahweh was regarded as the source both of good and evil to the people. When demonology came in new from Persian sources, Jahweh was relieved of responsibility for the evil. It became the function of Satan to oppose the welfare of the chosen people and to afflict them.[26] An illustration of this change of base is found in the history of David. A deadly pestilence ravaged the land. The explanation was offered that "the anger of Jahweh was kindled against Israel." Jahweh had said to David, "Go number Israel and Judah," but when the king obeyed the god was angry, apparently because taking a census to find out the strength of the people implied a doubt as to the divine ability to protect them. Hence the pestilence. A later account, written after the new theology about demons had taken root, relates that "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel" (II Sam. xxiv. 1; II Chron. xxi. 1). In the first story the plague was stayed after David had offered sacrifices which cost him "fifty shekels of silver," but the later account says it cost him "Six hundred shekels of gold by weight."

Satan and the demons had become the alleged causes,

[26] C. H. Toy: Judaism and Christianity, p. 156; Jackson and Lake: Beginnings of Christianity, p. 286.

by the time of Christ, of practically all the evils that afflict mankind. He is "The Prince of the power of the air," the tempter of men, the raging lion seeking whom he may devour. Where science finds disease germs and nerve lesions, mythology imagined there were demons tormenting men. To cure disease or sin it was thought to be necessary to exorcise the demons.

So mythology continued to develop among the Hebrews as among other nations. Demonology is one of the most prominent doctrines of the New Testament. Satan is mentioned as a real person no less than thirty-five times, Beelzebub seven times, and the demons one hundred and ten times. These characters were thought to be intelligent and active agents at work corrupting and destroying the works of God. On the theory that the Bible contains no mythology but is an infallible revelation of reality and truth, no escape is possible from the necessity of believing in the existence of these evil spirits which infest the air and obsess the minds of men. The healing power of Jesus was explained in the popular fashion as due to his power over demons. His name became a powerful one to conjure with in the exorcism of these invisible pests. He said that many would claim to be his disciples because "by thy name we cast out demons."

The fathers of the Church incorporated this mythology into their theology and made it of fundamental importance. They agreed that it was part of the divine revelation. "It is the demons," said Origen, "which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, pestilences; they hover concealed in clouds in the lower atmosphere, and are attracted by the blood and incense which heathen offer to their gods." Augustine said, "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons." Very early, Christ's work was conceived as a victorious conflict with Satan and the demons, his sufferings the scars of the combat. His death was reckoned to be a ransom paid to Satan for the release of sinners from bondage. In every

department of thought this interpretation of evil held sway. The weight of ecclesiastical opinion was cast against medical research as folly, for if the cause of disease is demoniacal the cure must be religious and not scientific. We have but to read Lecky's chapter on "Magic and Witchcraft" to realize the terrors bred by this belief, on biblical authority.[27] "By this current of thought," says White, "was gradually developed one of the greatest masses of superstitious cruelty that has ever afflicted humanity."[28]

Not the least of the blessings bestowed on men by the modern sciences has been deliverance from the nightmare of this old mythology. "There was this demon world," says Glover, "proven by all sickness and sin; proven by old belief, by old religions; proven by the agreement of all mankind; proven by the assent of the best and most philosophic minds. The Jew and the Christian were monotheists, but they too believed in the existence of demons; they were face to face with the awful reality of a demon world at war with God. . . All this dim world has passed from our minds; this tale of war in the spirit world is for us the merest mythology."[29]

Jahweh fighting for his chosen people, and the demons fighting against him and afflicting mankind are conceptions belonging to the mythology of antiquity. While the terms of that old philosophy remain in use they have been emptied of all real meaning. "Science and philosophical reflection," says Macintosh, "have been largely instrumental in cutting the ground from the belief in a personal devil. The natural causation of evils is too well known for the hypothesis of a transcendent and well-nigh omnipotent creator of evil to be any longer necessary. Temptation to evil is explained psychologically without

[27] W. E. H. Lecky: History of Rationalism in Europe, Chap i.
[28] Andrew White: Warfare of Science with Theology, II, p. 105.
[29] T. R. Glover: Jesus in the Experience of Men, p. 2.

the need of introducing a transcendent Tempter. . . Hence we know that the devil does not exist."[30]

When a man decides to abandon the biblical demonology his religious faith begins to shift from a mythological to a scientific basis. Progressive Christianity requires that this change be carried through with consistent thoroughness. That which may be known of God as the sole ruler of the forces of the universe and of the laws of His government in nature and in life, must be learned by the scientific method of observation, experiment, and verification. Many of the beliefs recorded in the Bible were based upon the ancient mythological methods of interpretation and in the light of recent knowledge they have become obsolete. To carry them over into modern religious thought on the score that they were divine revelations would serve merely to keep the human mind in bondage to ancient ignorance and perpetuate the warfare between religious tradition and modern culture. The task of Christianity now is to conserve and perfect the highest elements of spiritual experience gained in the past and to bring every science into the service of the moral and social ideals of Christ and the prophets.

> "Science was faith once; Faith were Science now,
> Would she but lay her bow and arrows by
> And arm her with the weapons of the time."

"Christianity," Ellwood says, "if it is to survive must become a positive religion . . . It must pass out of the theological and speculative stage into the positive and social stage. It must be purged of its mythological elements . . . This positive Christianity has room for a decided and positive belief in God, a God who manifests Himself in Nature, not only as a creative evolution, but in human nature and in human society as the spirit leading toward all truth, all rightness, all brotherhood. But this conception of God which positive re-

[30] D. C. Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, p. 227.

ligion arrives at is very different from many of the vagaries of speculative theology. It is more nearly in accord with the conception of God which Jesus held."[61]

In the light of all that science has to say about the universe and man, one of the greatest of modern philosophers reaches this conclusion—"Whatever the world may be in which Creative Love manifests itself, that world is undoubtedly devised as a whole by Love."[62] This faith, Boutroux, in finishing his study of *Science and Religion*, declared to be unshaken, saying, "No man hath beheld God at any time; if we love one another God abideth in us. In other words, God is love and love in communion. To love is to imitate God; it is to be God in a sense; it is to live in Him and through Him. These ideas which are at the heart of Christianity convey nothing but what is conformable to the highest aspirations of reason."[33]

[31]C. A. Ellwood: Reconstruction of Religion, pp. 120, 138.
[32]Hermann Lotze: Microcosmus, II, p. 723.
[33]Emile Boutroux: Science and Religion, p. 324.

CHAPTER XI

EVOLUTION AND BELIEF IN GOD

"If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to a belief in God, which is the foundation of all religion."

LORD KELVIN.

As the forces and laws of nature are discovered the gods and the demons go. Apollo, Zeus, Jehovah, and Satan become mere figures in the epic poetry of men. The very idea of God is challenged as the last great myth which reason must destroy. The universe is described in terms of mechanism, matter, force, law, and evolution. Nothing more, we are told, is needed for the interpretation of all mysteries. Mind becomes the dying radiance of clashing atoms in the brain, and God the magnified reflection of humanity cast by a brazen sky. Men become the cogs of a soulless machine, which forms them, grinds them into powder, and scatters their dust to the winds and waves—without purpose, aim, or plan. The unknown energy that drives the cosmic engines, drives blindly through eternity to an unknown goal; to worship it as God is like adoring the power throbbing in a dynamo. Religion is an illusion born out of ignorance and dies when the truth is known. Morality is good so long as it is useful but it has no divine sanction. To such conclusions some lovers of wisdom would lead us in the sacred name of Science. If they be true, the fate of men is to see their day of Illusion darken into the night of Reality, where the spiritual beauty of life must perish.

Is such mechanistic materialism to be the last great gift of science to mankind? May we not rather say that

although the tabernacles of mythical deities fall into ruin, science is gathering materials for a new temple of worship, worthy of the Eternal Spirit by whom and in whom all things exist? Truly, if the universe is more marvelous than our fathers dreamed, so also must its Creator be. To be frightened into giving up belief in God by the discoveries of science is like denying the existence of the sun because it is no longer the chariot of Apollo, driven across the sky.

"It concerns me, as a representative of natural science," says Haldane, "to point out that the doctrines of materialism are no part of natural science . . . The faith that behind the blurred vision of the world lies the love and power of God is, in reality, the same sort of faith as that of the man of science that behind the confusion of his observations there is an intelligible order."[1]

Neither materialism nor agnosticism is the necessary result of scientific knowledge and the evolutionary philosophy. Nor are these attitudes toward the Ultimate Reality peculiar to modern thought. They were common long before modern science or the doctrine of evolution was born. Skeptical schools of thought flourished before the Christian era. Protagoras declared, "So far as the gods are concerned, I cannot know whether they exist or do not exist; or what their nature is. Many things prevent our knowing. The matter is obscure and life is short." Against the materialists and agnostics of antiquity, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle forged and hurled mighty arguments. As science increases its wealth, theistic philosophy is not made bankrupt but is enriched. "The existence of God—the supreme truth asserted alike by Christianity and by inferior historic religions," said John Fiske, the American philosopher of evolution, "is asserted with equal emphasis by the Cosmic Philosophy, which seeks its data in science

[1] J. S. Haldane: Art. in Hibbert Journal, April, 1923.

alone."[2] "The true reality," wrote Lotze, "that is and ought to be, is not matter and still less Idea, but is the living personal Spirit of God and the world of personal spirits which He has created."[3]

The data of science are assembled from observation of the materials of creation. When the facts are systemized how shall they be interpreted? When the parts of a machine have been taken apart and analyzed down to the chemical composition of the last wheel, has the machine been fully explained? Is the quality of the designer and inventor of less consequence than the quality of the material used? Would it not be frivolous to remark, "Science knows nothing about him. He is unknown and unknowable. He probably does not exist. The machine, so far as known, just made itself"? If the universe be a mechanism of infinite complexity and automatic precision, is such an answer concerning its origin any less frivolous? "Let us always remind ourselves," says Findlay, "of the all-roundness of truth and let us remember that in our scientific approach we see but one side, one aspect of truth. Let us always recognize that through religion, art, literature and philosophy we have other paths of approach and see other aspects of truth."[4] The scientist in his inattention to God may become like the man who could not see the beauty of the forest for the trees. Preoccupied with details he misses their ultimate meaning. Deploring this result, one of our most eminent physicists remarks, "Science without religion may become a curse and not a blessing to mankind; but science dominated by the spirit of religion is the key to progress and the hope of the future."[5]

"No man hath seen God at any time," wrote an apostle. How then can we know Him? We should, indeed, know but little of any subject, if knowledge were

[2]John Fiske: Cosmic Philosophy, II, p. 415.
[3]Hermann Lotze: Microcosmus, II, p. 728.
[4]Alexander Findlay: Art. in Science, Oct. 23, 1925.
[5]R. A. Milliken: A Scientist Confesses His Faith, p. 17.

confined to what may be observed by the senses, and most of that little would be false. The eagle sees as much as the man, but knows less. Knowledge is a creation of the mind, not of the senses. Out of materials furnished by sense observation the body of knowledge is built up by the use of the materials, and the knowledge so gained is limited again by the mental faculties brought to the task.

"All our knowledge of natural objects," says Jevons, "must be ultimately derived from observation, and the difficult question arises, How can we ever know anything which we have not directly observed through one of the senses, the apertures of the mind? When we use our senses and perceive that the phenomenon does occur, reasoning is superfluous. If the senses cannot be used, because the event is in the future or out of reach, how can reasoning take its place? Apparently, at least, we must infer the unknown from the known, and the mind must itself create an addition to the sum of knowledge." This scientific method of creating knowledge by reasoning is called "inductive inference." From facts known by sense-perception, reason infers truths that are beyond demonstration to the senses. From recurring uniform sequences of events we infer the existence of a natural law; whether it is universal in its operation through all time and space we can only infer with various degrees of certainty. As Jevons says, "We can never recur too often to the truth that our knowledge of the laws and future events of the external world is only probable. . . Inductive inference might attain to certainty if our knowledge of the agents existing throughout the universe were complete, and if we were at the same time certain that the same Power which created the universe would allow it to proceed without arbitrary change."[6] From observation and by inductive inference, science gives us a working knowledge of the universe, constantly subject to

[6] W. S. Jevons: The Principles of Science, pp. 218, 235, 239.

enlargement and revision, and at no time complete or raised above a high degree of probability. The reality of things may be quite different from our interpretation of them, but what we learn can be used for our practical purposes. Exhaustive knowledge is denied, hence we walk by faith in what we infer to be the truth about things. Of the same character is our knowledge of God. The faith of religion rests on the same foundation as the faith of science. The latter reasons from a multitude of facts to a system of natural laws, the former from a multitude of laws to a Law-giver, the intelligent First Cause and Ruler of all.

An atom or an electron or the interstellar ether no man hath seen at any time. We infer their existence to explain the phenomena we have observed with the instruments of science. They are the creation of the mind, and whether the reality exactly corresponds to our ideas of them no man can tell. Although an atom is thousands of times too minute to be seen with the most powerful microscope, to account for its reactions we infer that within its infinitesmal area electrons dance around their orbits with the freedom of gnats in a great cathedral, each traveling faster than a bullet shot from the muzzle of a gun. We further infer that these electrons, which compose the mass of the atom, are but electric vortices of energy within the substance of an interstellar ether pervading all space. Reason leads Sir John J. Thompson to infer that this ether is many times denser than lead. Such knowledge is derived from observed facts by inductive inference, the reason moving step by step from the known into the unknown. By the same process the mind creates its knowledge of God. If absolute certainty and completeness of knowledge be denied, we may, at least, reach such a high degree of probability that we may walk as firmly by our religious as by our scientific faith.

By contemplating all that we do *not* know beyond the possibility of doubt about the universe or God, we may

fall into agnostic uncertainty of mind. By dogmatically affirming, without proof, that nothing does exist but matter and mechanism, and that mind is the product of organized matter and not its cause, we may fall into materialism. By meditating upon what we *do know* and all that may reasonably be inferred from that knowledge, we lay the firm foundations of theistic faith.

The immensity of our ignorance should keep us humble and teachable. Even so, the growing body of our knowledge confirms the reasonable inference of mankind that the glory of the invisible God is manifested in the things that are seen. But our knowledge of that God is no less imperfect than that of the universe in which we dwell. "Volumes might be written," says a recent writer, "as Spencer truly remarked, on the impiety of the pious; their familiarity with the secret counsels of the Most High makes Agnosticism seem by comparison a reverent and reasonable attitude. If to comprehend means to grasp, as it were, in the hand, to understand thoroughly, to see all around an object, then unquestionably the Infinite must forever remain incomprehensible by the finite. So far as Agnosticism simply emphasizes the unfathomableness of the universe by any human sounding-line, and opposes the little we know to the vast unknown, it is a praiseworthy lesson in humility."[7]

Following inductive inference, Spencer was led to say, "But one truth must grow ever clearer—the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested, to which he (the man of science) can neither find nor conceive either beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed."[8]

This Inscrutable Existence, like man himself is at

[7] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God, p. 165.
[8] Herbert Spencer: Principles of Sociology, III, p. 175.

once known and unknown. When we have first solved the mystery of man as an organized system of mind and body, we shall have a starting point for a deeper knowledge of the Infinite Energy from which he proceeds. Theistic faith, though ever falling short of complete comprehension or knowledge, is no idle dream, but the sound conclusion of the same kind of reasoning that leads to what we call scientific knowledge. It is a reasonable inference from the facts, and no other so intelligibly accounts for the facts.

Religion sends its roots down into this theistic philosophy and puts out many branches under the influence of the intellectual culture or spiritual experiences of men. "Religion itself consists in this," says Otto, "believing and experiencing that in time the Eternal, in the finite the Infinite, in the world God, is working, revealing Himself, and that in Him lies the reason and cause of all being."[9]

Such a religion becomes Christian, as we are able to attain the faith that the "Inscrutable Existence," which lies back of all things, has the character of a Father, whose supreme law is Love, and we become willing to live by that faith. Of this faith and life, Jesus is the acknowledged teacher. And it is the belief of Progressive Christianity that the philosophy of evolution does not invalidate this faith.

By taking reasonable pains we may learn *what* occurs under certain conditions in the world, but *how* the event crosses the dead line and comes into existence at all is the most baffling of problems. That an egg in an incubator will produce a chicken a child may observe, but *how* the chicken is formed within the shell, all the scientists in the world cannot explain. Such knowledge, however, as Lotze suggests, is not the kind of knowledge we require and would be of value only if we were called upon to create the chicken, or the world. Some forms

[9]Rudolf Otto: Naturalism and Religion, p. 370.

of energy—molecular, atomic, electric, thermic, and mechanical, we can, in a measure, direct to the accomplishment of our purposes, and we may even exercise some control over the development of life; but the infinitely more skillful use required to produce the exquisite and complex works of nature, makes the most expert human workman appear like an ignorant bungler. He can make a watch, but he cannot create a rose. All the marvels of what Jacks calls "The Living Universe" bear witness to the art and skill of a Mind infinitely greater than ours.

Evolution is the process of becoming in Nature, as growth is the process of becoming in an animal or plant. By it we mean that all things come to pass by orderly, progressive, and continuous changes, through the operation of natural forces by which more complex and higher organizations emerge out of simpler and lower. If machinery were organic in constitution, we should say that the automobile and locomotive of today had evolved out of the simpler and less perfect automobiles and locomotives of the early inventors. In that case, however, the evolution proceeded in the minds of men and was expressed in successive improvements, mechanically introduced. In nature the evolution takes place through changes wrought *within* the structure of things and improvements or variations grow out of them gradually, during long periods of time.

"The evolution idea," says Thomson, "is a master-key that opens many doors. It is a luminous interpretation of the world, throwing the light of the past upon the present. Everything is seen to be an antiquity, with a history behind it—a natural history, which enables us in some measure to understand how it has come to be as it is . . . Organic evolution means that the present is the child of the past and the parent of the future . . . It means that present-day animals and plants and all the subtle inter-relations between them

have arisen in a natural and knowable way from a preceding state of affairs on the whole somewhat simpler, and that from forms and inter-relations simpler still, and so on backwards and backwards for millions of years, till we lose all clews in the thick mist that hangs over life's beginnings."[10]

Evolution is feared in many quarters as the foe of religion and the rival of God, because the writers of the Bible had no knowledge of it and described creation in other terms. Legislatures have even forbidden its teaching in schools, and pulpits have resounded with anathemas of Darwin and all his disciples. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge?" exclaimed the Lord to Job, in the old Hebrew poem, and He defends the patriarch from the hoary traditionalism of his friends by recalling them to an observation of nature as the way to wisdom. Traditional "words without knowledge" too often continue to be the language of conventional piety.

As the champion of a host of the old believers, Bryan declared, "The fact that you can find no authority for Evolution in the Bible ought to be sufficient to make a Christian hesitate before he accepts it." But if authority for Evolution be found in nature, though not in the Bible, which is the more likely to be true? Christians have been forced many times to accept truth for which no authority could be found in the Bible. The earth moves around the sun, though the psalmist affirms, "God established the world that it should not be moved forever," and Calvin asked, "Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?". Luther was sure the new astronomy was wrong because "sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth." We keep on believing in the great antiquity of man though the Bible teaches otherwise. We believe in gravitation,

[10] J. Arthur Thomson: Outline of Science, I, p. 55 ff.

electricity, the immensity of the universe, the democratic form of government, votes for women, disease germs, the electric constitution of matter, and in prohibition, though even the allegorical method of interpretation would experience great difficulty in finding support for these beliefs from the Bible. To quote the Bible against evolution is like quoting it in favor of slavery, polygamy, witchcraft, war, magic, resurrections, massacres, or belief in a God who leads armies into battle and smells with pleasure the odor of roasting meat on his altars; the argument is not conclusive. The decisive question is not whether it is taught in the Bible but is it true.

How or why evolution takes place at all no man can tell. Following the clews which it offers we are able to describe more satisfactorily than by any other means the history of the world and its inhabitants from the beginning until now, and to follow the sequence of events through long ages. But it by no means solves all mysteries nor does it open the gate to all knowledge; it is merely one of the many instruments of science for unravelling the connections between the tangled phenomena of the world. In the words of Patrick, "We find that evolution has not explained what life is nor how it began nor how it reproduces itself, nor how growth and assimilation takes place, nor why there is a struggle for existence, nor why or how variations occur, nor even how species change into one another; nor has it explained that which is most important of all, the origin and nature of consciousness."[11] Still less is it an explanation of how the universe could arise and evolve without the directing Mind and Will of God.

One of the most amazing discoveries of science is its announcement that all things are composed of Energy streaming with unimaginable velocity through space. It floods the interstellar ether and consolidates into suns and stars. Currents of this energy flow freely as light,

[11] G. T. W. Patrick: The World and its Meaning, p. 108.

heat and electricity, each convertible into the other, while portions of it are bound within systems of infinitesimal size that we call atoms and molecules of matter. These aggregations of electric particles cohere in masses that float in an ethereal sea, subject to physical laws, which they obey. The most solid matter, we are told, is in reality a filmy structure of electric units whirling in a medium tossed by them into waves that flow in various sizes through space. A block of steel, sufficiently magnified, would appear like a cloud of perforated gossamer floating in a sea of light. Yet every thread of the gossamer is an orderly line of vibrant sparks of energy, which hold their posts like soldiers under orders.

Within the physical forces of nature appears the Vital Force, able to seize the material atoms and to organize them into living cells. The building unit of all organic structures is this protoplasmic cell. With ceaseless fecundity these living cells fill every crevice of earth and sea and air with creatures adapted to their environment. Somehow the line is crossed from the physical reactions of inorganic matter, and the automatic instincts of all forms of organic life emerge. With higher organization and gradual growth there is added to these the powers of rational intelligence, affection, moral sentiment, and self-directing will. The human mind at last emerges, bound to an organic apparatus, which connects it with its physical surroundings and its own ancestral past. Man with his face turned upward, strives to know the true, the beautiful, and good. With memory to unite his present with his past, with language to transmit the experience of one generation to the next, with imagination to visualize the future, with a little love bred within the family circle, with a little freedom of self-determination, he sets out to fulfill his destiny and to create the human world. By a continuous process of variation and change, here a little and there a little, the world has

come to be as it is, as if planned and directed by an Artist of infinite versatility and skill.

Organized molecules emerge out of vagrant energy, life emerges out of organized matter, mind emerges out of life, and morality, society, science, spirituality, and all cultural development emerge from the unfolding powers of mind. The forces at work, their laws, relations and products, from atoms to civilization, are proper subjects of scientific study. If such a process as evolution, as continuous and organic as the growth of a forest from a single seed, may be traced through the ages, the fact should be welcomed as an invaluable addition to our knowledge. It implies neither the affirmation or denial of a Creative Mind. It may leave one agnostic, materialistic, or theistic, according to the nature of the inferences he draws from his observations. For myself, it would seem like a betrayal of Reason to stop short of the theistic faith.

As Morgan says, "For better or worse, while I hold that the proper attitude of naturalism is strictly agnostic, therewith, I, for one, cannot rest content. For better or worse, I acknowledge God as the Nisus through whose Activity emergents emerge, and the whole course of emergent evolution is directed. Such is my philosophic creed, supplementary to my scientific policy of interpretation."[12]

The doctrine of evolution destroys many ancient myths and the dogmas founded on them, but it has no other effect upon belief in God than to dignify and ennoble it. "I often think," said John Fiske, "when working over my plants, of what Linnaeus once said of the unfolding of a blossom—"I saw God in His glory passing near me and bowed my head in worship."[13] That feeling deepens and strengthens in the presence of the panorama of an evolving world.

[12]C. Lloyd Morgan: Emergent Evolution, p. 35.
[13]John Fiske: Through Nature to God, p. 177.

A moving picture has been screened which shows the growth of a plant from the seed to the formation of the blossoms and the fruit. The slow motions of nature are speeded up so that the growth of a summer is condensed into a few minutes. The picture is reversed; slowly then the fruits again become flowers and these contract and sink into the stem; the leaves retreat into their buds and these are absorbed into their stalk; the stalk fades away cell by cell and retires into the earth to repose again in the seed; the seed returns to the parent tree.

Let us imagine that a picture could be imprinted on a film, showing the evolution of all things from the beginning of time. It would exhibit a continuous panorama of advancing organization and ascending life. Action would have to be speeded up to become clearly visible, and the slow movements of nature in a thousand years pass before the eye in a moment of time. Let this picture be reversed upon the screen. The familiar scenes around us would dissolve into the Middle Ages and then the ancient empires would march past. Civilization would quickly fade and primitive man appear in his huts and caves. The ugly monotony of that savage age would depress us. Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal types would then appear. Humanoid faces would merge slowly into more brutal forms; the races of mankind sink into their ancestral stems and disappear into the jungle. Animals long since extinct would now march past. As time moves slowly on, the great mammalian orders would vanish, followed by the birds, the reptiles, and the fishes. As the minutes lengthen into hours the earth would be slowly stripped of vegetation and life would retreat into protoplasmic cells and dissolve into the oceanic ooze. The soils would slowly turn back to rocks and the solid earth begin to glow with fervent heat, to burst at last into flame, explode into a nebulous mist, and join in space the dust of disintegrating stars.

All the heavenly bodies would disperse their elements into space. Still every element would remain intact, the center of restless energy. Ethereal waves would surge like a stormy ocean through shoreless space. Elementary atoms would relax their tension, and the electrons released would fly abroad in vast tides of power. In time these throbbing waves would slowly subside and sink to rest. Nothing then would move, for there would be nothing left to move. Not a trace would remain of all the galaxies of the heavens and their living freight. The end of the universe has come. It ended when all motion ceased. Thus may it have been before the beginning.

If we take our stand at that beginning and ask how the vanished universe, with all its glories, its countless forms of life and beauty, might find its way again into existence, what would our answer be? To expect it to reconstruct itself would seem to be more foolish than to say that metallic elements from the mines would assemble and form themselves into a printing press and publish books of their own composition. In both cases we are forced to postulate the activities of a living mind, to form either the universe or books. Either matter must organize itself and all its products, including mind, or Mind must precede and organize matter and its products. The most rational conclusion would seem to be that the Cause and Director of the pageant must be the Living Mind, which we call God. To call this conclusion "anthropomorphic" is not to condemn it, but merely to affirm that being men we must think as men. To attribute that Mind and Will to some abstraction, called Nature, is but to change the name of God. However incomprehensible that Creative Mind must ever be to the frail mind of man, we can at least perceive his wisdom and power in his works, and repose with confidence in his justice and good will. Evolution

is no denial of God but an exposition of the long history of his work of creation as told by its own records.

"If you ask," says Leighton, "where is God in the creative process? the answer is, everywhere. He is manifest in the energy of the electron, in the architecture of the atom, of the human brain, of the solar system. God is the infinite and ceaseless formative energy manifested in all things."[14]

"It seems to me," writes Conklin, "that evolution adds greatly to the wonder of life, because it takes it out of the realm of the arbitrary, the exceptional and links it to the sequence of causation. That man should be brought into existence by the fiat of omnipotent power is less an occasion of wonder than that he should have worked his way upward from lower non-human forms . . . We know that no man is born of full stature, with his hat and boots on; we know that he grows from an infant, and we know that the infant grows from the foetus, and that the foetus grows from a bit of nucleated protoplasm in the mother's womb. Why may not the race of men grow from a like simple beginning? It seems to be the natural order, first the germ, then the slow growth from the simple to the complex . . . What lies back of it all? Who planted the germ of the biological tree and predetermined all its branches? What determined one branch to eventuate in man, another in the dog, the horse, the bird, the reptile? From the finite or human point of view, we feel compelled to say that some vaster Being or Intelligence must have thought of these things from the beginning and before the beginning."[15]

In a recent statement signed by forty eminent American scientists this faith is affirmed: "It is a wholly sublime conception of God which is furnished by natural science and one wholly consonant with the highest ideals

[14]Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Modern Mind, p. 245.
[15]E. G. Conklin: The Direction of Human Evolution, p. 3.

of religion, when it represents Him as revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode of man and in the agelong breathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his godlike powers."[16]

"We are not lost then," says Martineau, "in our modern immensity of space; but may rest with the wise of every age, in the faith that a realm of intellectual order and purest purpose environs us, and that the unity of Nature is but the unity of the all-perfect Will. . . . I conclude then that neither of these modern discoveries, namely, the immense extension of the universe in space and its unlimited development in time, has any effect on theistic faith, except to glorify it."[17]

Evolution transforms a gospel of despair into a gospel of hope. We live not in a lost and ruined world, but in a world that is not yet complete. All things move in a ceaseless spiral upward. Portions of the ascending current of energy may strike obstacles, turn into backward moving eddies, or come to rest. But in time the obstacles are passed by the main current and progress is resumed. The redemption of man from the thralldom of brutish instincts, inherited from the past, into a new creature who will, through the spirit of love, organize all human life as one great brotherhood, is the last act of the mighty drama, and that plan will not end in a tragedy but in a triumph. The race that started lower than the apes shall rise to a status but little lower than the angels, as the sons and daughters of God. Such is the faith of Progressive Christianity.

"Evolution," said Henry Drummond, "has ushered a new hope into the world. The supreme message of science to this age is that all nature is on the side of the man who tries to rise. Evolution, development, progress, are not only in her program, they are her program. . .

[16]Art. in Christian Work, June 9, 1923.
[17]James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, pp. 9, 18.

An ascending energy is in the universe and the whole moves on with one mighty idea and anticipation. The aspiration of the human mind and heart is but the evolutionary movement becoming conscious. . . . Evolution is the scientific history of the world; Christianity is history, the history of some of the later stages in the evolution of the world. Positively, the idea of the immanent God, which is the God of evolution, is infinitely grander than the occasional wonder-worker of the old theology. Negatively, the older view is not only less worthy, but it is discredited by science."[18]

Whether or not the cosmological and other favorite proofs of the existence of God be conclusive does not here concern us. We have tried simply to show that the doctrine of evolution does not invalidate them. All the reasons for believing in and trusting Him are multiplied by our present scientific knowledge of the laws and processes of nature. And when we follow the development of life to its highest manifestation in the minds and hearts of men, we may with confidence arrive at the faith of Browning:

"Praise be Thine
I see the whole design.
I who saw Power, see Love now perfect too;
Perfect I call Thy plan;
Thanks that I was a man;
Master, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do."

[18]Henry Drummond: The Ascent of Man, pp. 340, 344.

CHAPTER XII

EVOLUTION AND HUMAN NATURE

"Arise and fly
The reeling faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die."
TENNYSON.

"The most characteristic of the Hebrew myths," says Moore, "is that of a lost paradise."[1] Not however as myth or poetry but as true history was the story of Eden received from Israel into the Christian Church and made the opening scene in the drama of human sin and redemption.

The origin of the human race was a favorite theme among ancient thinkers, as among the moderns. Their speculations were embodied in many myths. The Babylonian poets pictured the delight of all the gods in the creative ability of Marduk. His exploits were told at great length. When the gods complained that there was no one on earth to honor and worship them, Marduk said to Ea,

"My blood will I take and bone will I fashion,
I will create man, who shall inhabit the earth
That the services of the gods may be established,
And that their shrines may be built."[2]

Marduk then cut off his own head—being a god that did not permanently injure him—and from the mingling of his blood with the earth man was created, and human history began. The Hebrew tribes eliminated many of the more grotesque features of the older myths in telling the two stories found in Genesis.

[1]George F. Moore: History of Religions, II, p. 35 ff.
[2]Op. cit. I, p. 211.

To Paul, as to the Jews generally, these events were no allegory or myth but a true account of actual events and part and parcel of all later history. Adam was the sole progenitor of all mankind, from whom all inherit sin and death, while Christ "the Second Adam," his heavenly prototype, restores all that was lost by "the first Adam." "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "For Adam was first formed, then Eve, and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled fell into sin." Hence, says the apostle, "I allow no woman to teach or dictate to men; she must keep quiet" (I Tim. ii.).

This story is based on the ancient conception of punishment, according to which the family or tribe was considered a unit and liable for the conduct of any of its members. When Achan was found guilty, he and his sons and daughters were seized "and they burned them with fire and stoned them with stones" (Josh. vii. 25). When a famine devastated Israel, a revelation disclosed that Jehovah had sent it on the people in punishment for a sin of Saul, who had put some Gibeonites to death. As Saul was dead, King David sanctioned the hanging of the seven sons of Saul in punishment for their father's sin, "and after that God was entreated for the land" (II Sam. xxi.). Upon this unjust principle, all the tribe or posterity of Adam was judged to be worthy of death on account of their ancestor's sin. The whole human family thus inherited the doom of their first parents in the form of ceaseless labor and final death. A later age added to the first a second doom of punishment in hell, and this penalty was also made hereditary. Accepting this ancient principle of tribal responsibility and solidarity as a revelation of divine methods of justice, traditional Christianity developed its vast theological structure in the effort to show how God placated his wounded sense of justice, that led him to pronounce this curse, by the sacrificial sufferings of Christ, as a

means of saving believers from eternal woe. If, however, the narrative of the Fall in Eden was but a Semitic myth, and since this ancient principle of tribal responsibility is essentially unjust, then no divine curse was ever laid on the race for the sin of Adam, and the whole fabric of traditional orthodoxy crumbles into dust.

This mythology forms the fabric of dogmatic Christianity. "Our first parents," says the Westminster Confession, stating what is common to all the creeds, "being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit . . . By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all faculties and parts of soul and body . . . The sinner is so made subject to death, with all its miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal." "If Adam had not fallen," said John Wesley, "Christ had not died . . . We see then what unspeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our first parents, with regard to faith . . . If God had prevented the fall of man, the Word had never been made flesh . . . See then, upon the whole, how little reason we have to repine at the fall of our first parents, since therefrom we derive such unspeakable advantages, both in time and eternity."[3] Does this not sound like thankfulness for a shipwreck because it reveals the heroism of the captain in saving a few of the passengers, since the great majority of the human race under the Plan thus outlined for their salvation remain the heirs of eternal woe?[4]

This ancient myth, offered by primitive peoples as an explanation of sin and death in the world, was both simple and understandable. Like the story told to an enquiring child to explain the advent of a brother—"The doctor brought the baby"—it, however, ceases to satisfy when the real facts are learned.

[3]John Wesley: Sermon on God's Love to Fallen Man.
[4]See Canon Farrar: Mercy and Judgment, pp. 90–175.

The doctrine of evolution cancels the whole of this primitive interpretation of history. If it be true, the traditional Christian system of religion, originating in ancient myths and tribal notions of justice, cannot be true. It requires a complete reconstruction of religious thought that will displace the old Plan of Salvation, necessitated by the Fall of Adam, with the scientific and historical truth in regard to sin and punishment, Christ and human nature, and methods of establishing the will of God among men. Here two irreconcilable theories of world history meet, and efforts to compromise their antagonistic statements depend for their success upon the sacrifice of truth. Where does the truth lie? Is it to be found in the opinions of Moses or Paul, or is it to be learned from the testimony of Nature and History? We may be sure that nothing can be true in religion which is false in Nature and History. When the facts are known, we must accept them, whatever happens to theological traditions.

In regard to the origin of man, the verdict of science and history is rendered on the basis of the evidence now in hand. We state it in the words of Robinson: "It is now generally conceded by all who have studied the varied evidence and have freed their minds from ancient prejudice, that if we traced our human lineage far enough we should come to a point where our human ancestors had no civilization and lived a speechless, houseless, fireless, toolless life, similar to that of existing primates, with which we are zoologically connected. This is one of the most fully substantiated of historical facts, and one we can never neglect in our attempts to explain man as he now is. We are all descended from the lower animals, not only with an animal body, but with an animal mind. And this animal body and animal mind are the original foundation on which even our most refined and subtle intellectual life must rest."[5] "The de-

[5] J. H. Robinson: The Mind in the Making, p. 67.

velopment of a human being," says Conklin, "of a personality, from a germ cell is the climax of all wonders, greater even than that involved in the evolution of a species or in the making of a world."

The offense to racial pride, given by the alleged animal ancestry of man, causes perhaps more opposition to the doctrine of evolution than its disagreement with the Bible. Pride of pedigree is one of the most pardonable of human vanities. The aristocrat wishes to forget the peasant soil in which his family tree is rooted. The oriental kings, like the Mikados of Japan, traced their lineage to the immortal gods. So we, proud human patricians of the animal world, spurn a lowly animal origin and seek fictitious dignities. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair and took them wives of all that they chose and they bare children unto them." The offspring of these semi-divine fathers were called the "mighty men" of old, and "men of renown" (Gen. vi.). Who would not rather be a descendant of such illustrious ancestors than the offspring of a parentage even remotely connected with the apes? But the genealogist must stick to the facts, however disconcerting they may be to our human pride.

That redoubtable defender of the orthodox tradition, Mr. Bryan, derided "the doctrine that man instead of being created by the Almighty, with a purpose and according to a plan, is nothing but a development from the lower animals." Such ridicule might easily turn out to be a mockery of the methods of the Creator. The doctrine of evolution does not at all deny that man is created by the Almighty with a purpose and according to a plan; it is indeed an effort to understand the purpose and discern the plan. The diamond is nothing but a development of the carbon we know in plain charcoal, but it is none the less a diamond, and rightly known it gives us a new respect for the properties inherent in plain carbon. So man is none the less man, whatever

his origin, and if he were developed from lower animals, that fact, without derogating from his dignity, offers new reasons for admiring the animal creation. Let us not forget that every man is but a development from a nucleated cell, the humblest of all creatures. The choice offered by evolution is not between God and no-God, but between the plan of God described in an ancient myth and the plan of God described by science, interpreting the facts of nature. We may even glory in our humble origin and say with Watson, the English poet, in "The Dream of Man":

> "This is my loftiest greatness
> To have been born so low . .
> From glory to rise unto glory
> Is mine who have risen from gloom.
> I doubt if Thou knewest at my making
> How near to Thy throne I should climb,
> O'er the mountainous slopes of the ages
> And the conquered peaks of time."

"There is neither agreement nor certainty," says Thomson, "as to the antiquity of man, except that the modern type was distinguishable from its collaterals hundreds of thousands of years ago. The general impression left is very grand. In remote antiquity the Primate stem diverged from the other orders of mammals; it sent forth its tentative branches and the result was a tangle of monkeys; ages past and the monkeys were left behind, while the main stem, still probing its way, gave off the anthropoid apes, both great and small. But they too were left behind and the main line gave off other experiments,—indications of which we know in Java, in Neanderthal and at Piltdown. None of these lasted nor were made perfect. They represent tentative men who had their day and ceased to be, our predecessors rather than our ancestors. Still the main stem goes on evolving, and who will be bold enough to say what fruit it has yet to bear?"[6]

It is no part of our task to outline here the evidence

which supports the thesis that man arrived upon the earthly stage at the end of long ages of evolutionary growth from antecedent animal forms. They may be found in countless works of specialists upon the subject. We may only note a few facts and the conclusions that may be drawn from them.

Could we have visited Europe a quarter of a million years ago, we might have met the race which preceded the proud Nordics and Sudics. The man of that race "was a loose-limbed fellow, short of stature and of slouching gait, but a skilful artificer, fashioning beautifully worked flints with characteristic style. . . .But he had great beetling, ape-like brow ridges and massive jaws and he showed simian characters swarming in the details of his structure. In most points in which he differs from modern men he approaches the anthropoid apes."[6] Cro-Magnon and other races succeeded this Neanderthal man, ever buffeted by nature and struggling for existence against a hostile climate.

Modern man emerges on the scene of history out of that prehistoric past, bearing in body and in mind the marks of his animal origin. Not as the companions of the gods did our ancestors dwell in any earthly paradise. They were frozen with glacial blasts and stunted by desert heat. Pestilence and famine pursued them. Here they developed intelligence, courage and endurance; there they degenerated and perished. Those survived who best adjusted themselves to their environment. With ruthless vigilance Nature weeded out the badly adapted. Out of those pre-historic struggles the different races, which people the earth today, emerged to perpetuate their differences down to modern times. "An intense selective process thus went on," says Huntington, "whereby only those with the greatest endurance and the greatest skill could survive."[7]

[6] J. Arthur Thomson: Outline of Science, I, pp. 170, 169.
[7] Ellsworth Huntington: The Character of Races, p. 52.

The human species finally diverged into three great subdivisions—the Negroid, the Mongoloid, and the Caucasian. How wide is the gulf to-day which separates the high-browed white American from the black pigmy of the African jungle! The same evolutionary forces which divided the human family into black, white, brown and yellow peoples to plague the world with their racial antipathies, in times more distant, caused the primates of the mammalian order to diverge into monkeys, apes, and men, as distinct branches on the tree of life.

Evolution tells a nobler and more truthful tale of human origins than the old Hebrew myth. Men are not the degenerate progeny of a godlike race, isolated from all entangling alliances with the world below them. Fumbling their way out of the twilight of organic instincts, they groped toward the light of knowledge and self-conscious personality. Lashed by hunger and cold, driven for ages by changes of climate from one region of the earth to another, transmitting to their posterity their acquired knowledge by slowly growing languages and picture writing, learning the use of metals in their arts and of beasts of burden in their industry, domesticating animals in their service, organizing the family, the tribe and clan for purposes of defense, establishing beneficial customs as moral codes, they toiled up the way of progress toward civilizations of which they did not dream. The perfect man and the perfect society stand not at the beginning but at the end of their development. The glory of the race is not in its first estate, from which it has ignominiously fallen, but in its last estate to which it is laboriously rising. From the beginning there has been a steady advance of marching columns up the steep ascent to culture, character, and civilization, and the end is not yet revealed.

Straggling along the highway, which has led from the jungle and the cave to the human home of refinement, love, and beauty, may be found scattered fragments of

the race which have failed to keep up with the procession. Balked by the difficulties of the way, they ceased to advance much above the low level of animal intelligence. And far behind them stretches the long road paved with the bones of numberless generations who died, not having seen the promised inheritance. Modern science stresses the fact that our present human life is organic with all life back to the beginning, and has arisen out of it by continuous variation and development of latent powers within. In an ascending order, body and brain, intellectual and spiritual life, unfold their powers. Their roots extend down into all preceding life, as a tree rooted in the mother earth rises upward to bear its branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruits in the upper air. In the original germ of all life, as in the seed of the tree, lay the power and potency of all that grew out of it. Thus are we born, with the marks of our origin stamped in every fibre of our being; savagery and animalism still howl in the kennels of the subconscious, often but feebly suppressed and controlled. We may revert to ancient types by loss of self-control or we may overcome the brute within, and by the cultivation of qualities we call spiritual, rise to partake of the divine nature.

"If man is brother of the animals," says Conklin, "he is also akin to the Infinite. The glory of the brute is physical, the glory of man is intellectual, social, spiritual. Evolution teaches the animal ancestry of man, but in spite of this does not degrade him, for it teaches that he is the consummation of this stupendous process. The dignity of man is not due to the fact that recently and miraculously he was launched into the world; the real dignity of man consists not in his origin, but in what he is and what he may become."[8]

Bergson has remarked that we soon become conscious that the human intellect in the study of life suffers a

[8]Edwin G. Conklin: The Direction of Human Evolution, p. 234.

serious disability. "Our intelligence, as it leaves the hands of nature, has for its chief object the unorganized solid . . . We are at ease only in the discontinuous, in the immobile, in the dead. The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to interpret life."[9] On this account, we constantly strive to interpret life in terms of mechanics, physics and chemistry. The continuity, fecundity, and growth of life continually baffle us. As a product of life we cannot understand the process. A machine we might explain, because it is a solid, but life eludes us. We can only relate our experiences of life, and admit that the materials it uses no more explains it than the soil of the garden explains the rose growing out of it.

In the experience of life, we find a conflict of forces manifesting itself in consciousness. Just how we come to possess them is a secret of creation no man has discovered. We know them as part of our inheritance from the past. To Plato the nature of man seemed like a chariot drawn by two fiery horses, whom Reason, the charioteer, strives to bring into obedience to the reins. One of the horses is of noble breed, while the other is an ugly and intractable beast. Much the same was the conception of Paul, who speaks of the strife between flesh and spirit, saying, "ye may not do the thing that ye would." Psychology may analyze the human creature into an unstable union of complexes, or describe the urge of the libido, or offer descriptions of the dynamic ideas and emotions surging up from the subconscious to mingle with the ideals and purposes of the conscious mind, but we cannot fail to see that life itself is just as incomprehensible as God. That which it does we know, but that which it is we do not know. But we may cherish the faith that the ascent already achieved from the lowest to the highest forms of its development is prophetic of something greater still, as men coöperate

[9] Henri Bergson: Creative Evolution, pp. 162, 174.

intelligently with the Creative Power for their own improvement.

Ugliness, error, suffering, and sin afflict the world and cause us to doubt the wisdom or the goodness of God. We think all things should have been made perfect in beauty, wisdom, happiness, and goodness. To launch imperfect creatures upon the perilous adventure of existence, with no more adequate protection against mishaps, injuries, and troubles than seems to be the case, appears to us, when in this critical humor, to be as heartless as the abandonment of a baby in a forest filled with wolves. So we complain that if God be a Father at all, He is an unkind Parent who leaves His offspring to survive or perish, as may happen. Due to their constitutional inability to comprehend life in its ascent to spontaneity and freedom, our minds lose themselves in dreams of a world mechanically perfect, fitted together like the parts of a clock, guaranteed to run smoothly, infallibly protected from injury and moving with frictionless ease to do what its maker designed it to do. Such a Machine would be pronounced good by the critical determinist, who thinks that living things are but badly made machines and who is vexed that so many things go awry in the world he knows. We manufacture solids into machines that do our wills, then think the Creator should have organized living beings in the same way, incapable of deviating from paths of safety and happiness. But the very essence of life is a nascent ability to enter upon slowly widening areas of freedom and self-direction, in which may be found new instincts and new knowledge, variation and development, education and character.

Life is in constant process of becoming something other than it was and so differs fundamentally from all material machines. It is sensitive to environment and so subject to change and misdirection; it reacts with pain or pleasure to its experiences; carries along some memories of its past to compare and contrast with its present; and

acquires consciousness of its own failures and successes. All the qualities of life enlarge and deepen as it ascends to higher forms and that which was as rudimentary in the beginning as the faculties of an infant slowly develops to its fuller powers. To live at all is to encounter all the vicissitudes of life, with the possibility of mischance and suffering and death; it is to possess a body capable of pleasure that will also be capable of pain. It is certain that we should find a mechanically perfect world, incapable of error and suffering, disappointment or sorrow, selfishness or sin, to be a perfectly insipid world, where we should long in vain for something to happen to challenge us to effort and endurance. It would be a world constructed on the model of a factory, where every wheel must stay in its place and every machine must perform its predetermined functions with ease and efficiency. It would be a world of smiling marionettes and not of dynamic men. By contrast with such an automatic, well-oiled mechanism, the present world with all its troubles would seem to be a paradise. Rather would we live in a growing world of life, with some spontaneity and freedom, to whose perfecting we may contribute a little by our labor and our love.

From life as we know it, we learn that character is an achievement and not a gift, even the character we inherit being won by the long-protracted efforts of our ancestors. Character must be tempered in the fires of temptation and strengthened by struggle with difficulties. In a protected world of mechanical perfection, which no unhappiness or error or sin might invade, there might be the beauty of innocence, or the simplicity of unending infancy, but not the strength, the courage, the knowledge and the love which mature in the world as we know it. In George Eliot's *Stradivarius*, the old violin-maker says:

> "I say, not God Himself can make man's best
> Without best men to help Him . . .
> 'Tis God gives skill

But could not make Antonio Stradivarius' violins
Without Antonio."

So in the deepest sense it is true that God cannot make men in the living world left purposefully incomplete, without men to help him.

The organic evolution of all living things by a continuous process of variation and differentiation, culminating at last in human history, which is also seen to be a continuous evolution of man and all his works—this seems to be the true description of what has happened in the world. Men have animal bodies belonging to a definite zoölogical classification. Psychology recognizes in human nature vestiges of the animal mind. But with increased powers of memory, reason, affection, and imagination, with the gift of self-conscious introspection, with clearer vision of the past and future, with a growing appreciation of social and moral values, with accumulating knowledge and enlarging areas of freedom, men are continually altering life and the world to suit their heart's desires better. In them life is still in process of development. As Thorndike says, "The original tendencies of man have not been right, are not right, and probably never will be right. By them alone few of the best wants of human life would have been felt, and fewer still satisfied. . . Man is now as civilized, rational and human as he is, because man in the past has changed things into shapes more satisfying to man as a whole. Man is thus eternally altering himself to suit himself. His nature is not right in his own eyes. Only one thing in it, indeed, is unreservedly good,—the power to make it better."[10] This power to make it better, through the plastic forces of nature to realize the ideals of his inner vision, difficult as it is to exercise, constitutes a higher blessing for men than would an inheritance mechanically perfect and incapable of improvement.

The continuation of the higher evolution of man, by

[10] E. L. Thorndike: Original Nature of Man, p. 281.

which the gap may be greatly widened that now separates him from low-browed stupidity, wallowing bestiality, and consuming selfishness, is the moral problem of the race. To the solution of the problem both religion and science must make their contributions, but success is possible only because human life is plastic and contains in germ the high qualities which may later appear full-grown. Defects in human life and society cannot be corrected like mechanical imperfections; it must be done by the unfolding or education of that which is enfolded in life, and men must themselves coöperate in the process. On the lower levels of nature conscious coöperation in the work of evolving what is potential in life is very faint; but on the present human level it has become the indispensable factor, without which further advance will not be made.

"As a structure," says Hocking, "human nature is undoubtedly the most plastic part of the living world, the most adaptable, the most educable. . . Of all animals, it is in man that heredity counts for least and conscious building forces for most. . . Consider that his infancy is longest, his instincts less fixed, his powers of habit-forming and habit-changing most marked, his susceptibility to social impressions keenest; and it becomes clear that in every way nature as a prescriptive power has provided in him for her own displacement. His major instincts and passions appear first upon the scene, not as controlling forces but as elements of play, in a prolonged life of play. Other creatures nature could finish; the human creature must finish himself. . . To everyone who asserts as a dogma 'human nature never changes,' it is fair to reply it is human nature to change itself."[11]

Once science thus lifts the curtain and reveals the origin and evolution of man by continuous changes and variations through the operation of natural forces in the

[11] W. E. Hocking: Human Nature and its Remaking, p. 3.

ascending spiral of life, the work of ethics, religion, education, and government acquires a new and deeper significance. They are called upon, not to repair a broken-down creative plan, but to carry on a going project to completion. "We are workers together with God."

"Henceforward," says Dr. Geley, "the cause and function of evil are perfectly understandable. Evil does not arise from the will nor the impotence nor want of foresight of a responsible Creator. Nor is it the result of a Fall. It is the inevitable result of awakening consciousness. The efforts required for the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness cannot but be painful. Chaos, gropings, struggle, suffering—all are consequences of primitive ignorance and of effort to leave it behind. Evolutionary theory is only the statement of these gropings, these struggles, these sufferings; and if evolution has its foundation in unconsciousness, in ignorance and evil, its summit is in light, in knowledge and in happiness."[12]

The human race emerged into a world where perpetual struggle for existence had been universal. From the start men were environed on every side by forces which buffeted them. Everywhere there had been incessant competition between all living things for the right to live at all. In the words of Crile, "It is a constant drama of getting food and seeking to escape being made food, evolving in the conflict structures fitted to accomplish both reactions. Everywhere the strong prey upon the weak, the swift upon the slow, the clever upon the stupid; the weak, the slow, the stupid retaliate by evolving mechanisms of defence. . . . The result of this two-fold conflict between living things is to evolve their manifold structures and functions—teeth, claws, skin, color, fur, feathers, horns, tusks, wily instincts, strength, stealth, deceit, humility, which make up the character

[12]Gustave Geley: From the Unconscious to the Conscious, p. 320.

of the animal world. . . Throughout its whole course, the process of evolution, where it is visible in the struggle of organisms, has been marked by a progressive victory of brain over brawn."[13]

With the victory of brain over brawn, resort was had to more refined weapons of offense and defense. "A little reflection," says Crozier, "will show that corresponding to these horns, fangs, stings, of the lower animals, and to the appetites of fear, hunger and self-preservation by which they are set in motion, is what we call the evil nature in man. Besides his coarser physical defenses against his enemies, man has the finer weapons of envy, pride, jealousy, revenge and the like, which are merely instruments of individuation and self-preservation carried up into the mind and transmuted into more subtle and flexible rapiers of attack and defense."[14]

This partnership between the primary animal instincts and weapons and the higher intellectual armament of men, finds an open field for exercise and alluring rewards for success in human society. On account of this alliance between animal instinct and human ability it is common to liken a human character to some lower animal—a man may be called a fox, a wolf, a shark, a serpent, a cur, a tiger, a peacock, or just a plain brute. This gives us a clew to the origin and nature of sin. No longer does it point to the debacle of an exquisitely perfect structure, but rather to defects in a structure in process of completion. "Sin," says Dr. Brown, "is the inevitable result of certain tendencies inwrought in the structure of human nature. It is the survival of the animal in man, his failure to rise to the high capacities within him. Salvation is a process going on through the ages and rooted as truly as sin in the nature of man."[15]

As a product of nature, a man is neither sinful nor

[13]George W. Crile: Man, an Adaptive Mechanism, p. 17.
[14]J. B. Crozier: History of Civilization, p. 114.
[15]W. A. Brown: Art. in the Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1911.

sinless, moral nor immoral. He is capable of becoming any of these. His moral, like his intellectual nature, is undeveloped in the beginning and what he afterward becomes depends partly on the qualities he inherits, partly upon his education and environment, and partly upon his own volition. The result is that infinite variety of character which makes the human race interesting. Life is a great adventure in a world full of danger and mystery, and for each of us no other question is so important as the kind of character we choose to gain from the experience and the kind of influence we shall leave behind us. Shall we rise to a higher level or sink to a lower than the one on which we commenced our career? To the extent that we fall or rise we will be subject to blame or praise.

Naturalism looks too exclusively on the darker side of the picture and ignores the emergent higher world of the higher life, whose roots are also buried in the prehistoric past. It sees only a free-for-all fight and acclaims the fierceness, force, or cunning which crushes or outwits the weak and stupid. Its Superman is the Superbeast. Santayana says that Nietzsche proclaimed the coming of a race whose qualities shall be "superior to ours by resembling those of the fiercer and wilder animals. The things which make men tame must be changed into their opposites."[16]

If the observer is blind to everything in nature but the reign of selfishness and force, that will be the kind of account he will give of the essential conditions of evolutionary progress in human society. He will say with Bernhardi: "Wherever we look in nature we find war is the fundamental law of development. This great verity, which has been recognized in past ages, has been convincingly demonstrated in modern times by Charles Darwin. He proved that nature is ruled by an unceasing struggle for existence, by the right of the stronger, and

[16]George Santayana: Egotism in German Philosophy, p. 138.

that this struggle, in its apparent cruelty, brings about selection, eliminating the weak and unwholesome. . . . The law of the struggle for existence applies also to man. . . If men and states acted absolutely unselfishly war would be avoidable. That is a condition that can be neither expected nor hoped for. Hence war is inevitable. . . It becomes an indispensable regulator because without war there could be neither racial nor cultural progress."[17]

The aversion roused by such a philosophy is largely responsible for the antipathy which evolution awakens in many minds. It is thought to be synonymous with an apologetic for selfishness in its most violent forms. If that were true, the doctrine of evolution would appear to be anti-Christian or Christianity contrary to Nature. But such a philosophy is based upon an observation of the jungle at its worst. It interprets the whole of life by the extremes to which the brute may go when he is savage with hunger. Other factors of the utmost importance are ignored. The battle for food goes on in the animal world, though with less suffering than we are likely to imagine, because neither victor nor victim has the human capacity for suffering which comes with the possession of more vivid consciousness, longer memory, and stronger imagination. The palsy of a lamb in the jaws of a wolf is not to be compared with the anguish of a man with a bayonet in his bowels. And even on this animal plane of existence there are other more attractive factors of immense importance in the evolutionary process that must not be overlooked.

Indeed, if we have the eyes to see, we shall find the roots of moral character even in the lower levels of life. There they are waiting to produce their more perfect fruitage in the higher life of humanity. The fact is that every battlefield of life was early invaded by instinctive love and mutual aid, and in the higher forms of life

[17]General von Bernhardi: Britain as Germany's Vassal, p. 106.

these became indispensable factors in survival and in the successful pursuit of happiness.

Like the first faint rays of approaching dawn which announce the coming day, the quality of instinctive affection suffused with beauty the early stages of ascending life. Low down in the scale, it appeared, in the words of Thomson, "as the love of mates, parental sacrifice, filial affection, the kindliness of kindred, gregariousness, sociality, coöperation, mutual aid and altruism generally. These are facts of life, though we differ as to the precise psychological terms to be used in describing them. The business of life all through includes the care of others as well as the care of self. As Herbert Spencer says, "If we define altruism as being action, which in the normal course of things benefits others instead of benefitting self, then from the dawn of life, altruism has been there no less than egoism. Self-sacrifice is no less primordial than selfishness. . ." Kropotkin has done real service to science in showing, in detail, how much of mutual aid there is among the animals. Our thesis is that progress depends on much more than a squabble around a platter, that it includes all the multitudinous efforts for self and others, between the poles of hunger and love; that it comprises all the endeavours of mate for mate, of parent for offspring, of kin for kin; as well as every kind of self-assertiveness. . . that egoism is not satisfied until it becomes altruistic."[18]

Fiske offers the same testimony to the presence of instinctive altruism and love in subhuman lives. "The moral sentiments," he says, "the moral law, devotion to unselfish ends, disinterested love, nobility of soul,—these are Nature's most highly wrought products, latest in coming to maturity; they are the consummation toward which all earlier prophecy pointed. . . Below the surface din and clashing of the struggle for life we hear the undertone of deep ethical purpose, as it rolls in solemn

[18]J. Arthur Thomson: Darwinism and Human Life, pp. 87–92.

music through the ages, its volume swelling in every victory, great or small, of right over wrong, till in the fullness of time, in God's own time, it shall burst forth in the triumphant chorus of humanity, purified and redeemed."[19]

The drive of nature was toward the production of a race in which non-moral selfishness and instinctive mutualism will be superseded by conscious moral choice of unselfish love as the universal law of life. That is, the course it takes is upward from the natural and instinctive to the spiritual and rational plane. The most powerful factor in this long upward drive introduced itself when the young began to receive parental care through a slowly lengthening period of infancy. In the higher forms of life the very continuation of the species was made to depend upon fidelity to the instincts of affection and self-denying care of the helpless. Families of life deficient in these qualities soon fell behind in the race or were doomed to extinction; and their heartlessness with them. Love was bred into the blood of ascending life. Self-sacrificing devotion for others became a biological law of superlative importance. It is a cardinal mistake to think it a recent gift imported from heaven.

McDougall shows that, "The maternal instinct, which impels the mother to protect and cherish her young, is common to almost all the higher species of animals. Like other species, the human species is dependent upon this instinct for its continued existence and welfare. It is true that reason working in the service of egotistic impulses and sentiments, often circumvents the ends of this instinct and sets up habits incompatible with it. When that occurs on a large scale in any society, that society is doomed to rapid decay. But the instinct can never die out, save with the disappearance of the human species itself; it is kept strong and effective just because

[19]John Fiske: Through Nature to God, p. 130.

those families and races in which it weakens become rapidly supplanted by those in which it is strong."[20]

A tiny spark of parental love implanted in the animal mother was the ignition of a light whose growing radiance will finally save and glorify humanity. It formed a weak and uncertain bond for the family and the tribe in the jungle and the cave, feebly uniting small groups for mutual aid and comfort, but in the ascending mammalian line, it gathered strength through the ages until love now finally demands supremacy in all social relations and reveals itself as the divine condition of human perfection, happiness, and peace.

"Love, then," said Henry Drummond, "had no chance till the human mother came. To her was given a curriculum prolonged enough to let her graduate in the school of the affections. Not for days or weeks, but for months, as the cry of the infant's helplessness went forth she must stand between the flickering flame and death; and for years to come, until the budding intellect could take its own command, the Love dare not grow cold nor pause an hour in its unselfish ministry. Bad parents mean starved children, and starved children will be replaced in the struggle for life by full-fed children, and ere a few generations parents without love will exist no more. The child, on the other hand, which has drunk most deeply of the Father's or Mother's love, lives to hand on that which has spared it to the race. . . . Physically, psychically and ethically, the family is the masterpiece of Evolution. The creation of Evolution it was destined to become the most effective instrument and ally which Evolution has ever had. . . Love is the final product of Evolution. This is what stands out in Nature as the supreme creation."[21]

Huxley asked us to notice that the ethical progress of society requires us to repudiate the "gladiatorial theory

[20]William McDougall: Social Psychology, p. 69 ff.
[21]Henry Drummond: The Ascent of Man, pp. 288, 316, 335.

of existence." "In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; instead of thrusting aside and treading down all competitors it requires that the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest as to fitting as many as possible to survive."[22] He calls this an "audacious proposal" emanating from the nature of man, and it is practicable because the elements which ensure success are a part of the process of nature and inherited by man from the mighty past. The love that broods over new-born life shall become the love "that suffers long and is kind" to every form of life. The Divine Power which drives the loom of life and supplies its warp and woof has ordained it so.

Evolution is thus not inconsistent with the ethical ideals of Christianity. As Fiske declares: "He to whom the theory of evolution, in all its details, has become as familiar as the saws and maxims of the old mythology are to him who still accepts them, will recognize that to be untrue to the highest attainable ethical code is to be untrue to philosophy, untrue to science, untrue to himself. Thus the grand equation between duty and action, the substitution of scientific for theological symbols involves no alteration of ethical values. And thus in casting aside the mythologic formulas in which religious obligation was formerly symbolized, we do but recognize the obligation as more binding than ever."[23]

"Love, whether sexual, parental or fraternal," says Santayana, "is essentially sacrificial, and prompts a man to give his life for his friends. In thus losing his life gladly he in a sense finds it anew. . . Nature in denying us perrenial youth, has at least invited us to become unselfish and noble."[24]

Progressive Christianity recognizes the essentially Christian qualities inherent in the natural life of man.

[22] Thomas H. Huxley: Evolution and Ethics, p. 81.
[23] John Fiske: Cosmic Philosophy, II, p. 468.
[24] George Santayana: Little Essays, p. 99.

Human nature is not totally depraved. It is unbalanced, disordered, and imperfect. The function of religion is to inspire faith in the high spiritual ideal set before men for their attainment, and to show that God is already in the field on the side of love and brotherhood to perfect that which nature has begun. The problem set before us is one of choice and self-direction, that the brutish impulses and selfish instincts may be controlled for the sake of the welfare and happiness of others. "There is liberty to follow or not to follow," says Simpson, "and the growing liberty implies a moral order in which moral evil is a possibility. But that possibility however realized has been powerless to prevent the moral progress of the race. Morality is not so much *in* the nature of things as actually it *is* the nature of things; the moral order is *the* order of the world."[25] Matthew Arnold writes:

"We would have inward peace
Yet will not look within;
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin."[26]

In this Creative Evolution which unrolls its living panorama through the ages, what is the final purpose? Let Bergson answer the question, "It was to create with matter, which is necessity itself, an instrument of freedom, to make a machine which should triumph over mechanism, and to use the determinism of nature to pass through the meshes of the net which this very determinism had spread. But, everywhere except in man, consciousness had let itself be caught in the net whose meshes it tried to pass through; it has remained the captive of the mechanisms it has set up. Automatism, which it tries to draw in the direction of freedom, winds about it and drags it down. It has not the power of escape, because the energy it has provided for acts is almost all employed in maintaining the infinitely subtle

[25] J. Y. Simpson: Man, and the Attainment of Immortality, p. 258.
[26] Matthew Arnold: Empedocles on Etna.

and essentially unstable equilibrium into which it has brought matter. But man not only maintains his machine, he succeeds in using it as he pleases. Doubtless he owes this to the superiority of his brain, which enables him to build up an unlimited number of motor mechanisms, to oppose new habits to old ones unceasingly, and, by dividing automatism against itself to rule it. . . All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, a man bestrides the animal, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death."[27]

[27]Henri Bergson: Creative Evolution, pp. 278, 285.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHRIST OF THE CREEDS

"Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of the prophets. Alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates Himself in man, and evermore goes forth to take possession of His world."

EMERSON.

Progressive Christianity agrees that what we believe about Christ is of great importance because it will affect what we believe about ourselves and about God. The theology believed, whatever it be, has a direct moral and social influence, for good or ill, on the conduct of life. In the effort to clarify our thinking about him, we shall glance at the dogmas of the Christian creeds.

These dogmas mean to many no more than did the good "Rector of Wyck," in his nebulous statement of his "Grand Central Truth," as given by May Sinclair—"God is love and love was in Christ, so God was in Christ and Christ was God." Not very good logic, but the ideal of the divine authority of the law of love, accepted and obeyed, is the inspiration of multitudes of noble lives, whose thinking is sufficiently muddled for them to imagine themselves quite in harmony with the creeds and opposed to all heresy.

This belief, as held by Protestantism is stated in The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion—"The Godhead and the manhood were joined together in one Person, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man."

How we are to understand this pronouncement is explained by Canon Liddon in his famous exposition: "In the belief of the Church, Jesus stands alone among the sons of men, as He of whom it can be said without

impiety that He was not merely divine but God. . . In saying that Christ took our nature upon Him, we imply that His Person existed before, and that the Manhood He assumed was impersonal. . . As God and Man, our Lord has two wills; but the Divine Will originates and rules His action; the Human Will is but the docile servant of the Will of God, which has its seat in Christ's Divine and Eternal Person. . . The sacred Manhood is a creature, yet it is indissolubly united to the Eternal Word. It differs from every other created being in that God personally tenants it."[1]

The essential point in the dogma is that Jesus Christ was an Eternal Person, existing before the human Jesus, and who incarnated Himself in Jesus only. "He was Son before he became man," says Forsythe. "The Incarnation thus originated in the eternal, personal, holy and obedient relation of the Son to the Father, and in the act of renunciation outside the walls of the world."[2] "The unique dignity and unique relation to God claimed by Christ," says Beet, "imply that in the human body of Jesus lived One who existed from eternity as a Person distinct from the Father yet in closest relation to Him, the Eternal Son of God."[3]

The attempt to rise by a ladder of inference to the deity of Christ from the character or the love of God as revealed in his human life does not fulfill the conditions prescribed in the orthodox faith. "In looking to him," says Mathews, "we find ourselves praying to the God whom we conceive to be like him. In him we feel that we can see as much of God and of His character as is possible for an individual to express."[4] That may be quite true, but such is not the dogma of the incarnation traditionally imposed by the Church, and should not be confused with it. A man, who was like God,

[1]Canon Liddon: The Divinity of our Lord, pp. 28, 262 ff.
[2]P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 273.
[3]J. Agar Beet: Nature and Christ, p. 110.
[4]Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, p. 143.

may be consistent with the Unitarian doctrine but not with the Trinitarian, which definitely and unambiguously affirms that Christ was not merely like God, but was God. "That Person, Jesus of Nazareth," says Bishop Gore, "is on the throne of the universe."[5] In the same strain, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church define the faith of their Church. "We believe in God the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son. Not in a divine exemplar merely. Not in a God-filled man merely. But in the Lord of Glory, God manifest in the flesh, co-eternal and one in Godhood with the Father."[6] "Liberalism," says Machen, "regards Jesus as the fairest flower of humanity, Christianity regards him as a supernatural person. To say that Jesus is God means that the Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated in Jesus and in no one else . . . Christ is either God or else is simply man; he is plainly no intermediate being between God and man. If then, He is not merely man, but a supernatural person, the conclusion is that He is God."[7]

This statement that Jesus was both God and man is admitted to be incredible to the unbeliever, but its truth can be and is attested by the Christian experience of those who believe and feel the love of God in their hearts, while any form of spiritual experience is not genuinely Christian but a counterfeit that does not issue in this belief. "It cannot be too often recalled," says Forsythe, "that the article of Christ's deity is the theological expression of the evangelical experience of salvation, apart from which it is little less than absurd, and no wonder it is incredible."[8]

The "dynamic" quality of this belief and its ability to attract devotees, is highly eulogized as an evidence of its truth. In comparison the liberal faith is said to

[5]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, p. 316.
[6]Address of the Methodist Bishops, May, 1924.
[7]J. G. Machen: Christianity and Liberalism, pp. 80–116.
[8]P. T. Forsythe: The Person and the Place of Jesus Christ, p. 74.

lack aggressiveness and statistical success. Like the faith of Islam it has been dynamic, even to intolerance. Let us give credit where credit is due. For centuries it was propagated with fire and sword on the theory that the only good heretic was a dead heretic. Even as late as the last part of the eighteenth century Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian scientist, was for his disbelief of the dogma, mobbed and driven from his native land. Belief in an infallible church was dynamic in building up Romanism, but its far-flung success fails to convince Protestants that the dogma is true. Belief in an infallible Bible was dynamic in the times of the Reformation—are we therefore prepared to admit that the Bible contains no errors? Belief in demons and witchcraft was once dynamic enough to terrorize Europe—but was it thereby proven to be true? Belief in a hell of fire and brimstone has without doubt proved dynamic enough to prompt many a scoundrel to reform his life—does that fact place it beyond doubt? The Roman Mass has been very dynamic in attracting multitudes to a religious service, but to the Protestant world it remains a futile, paganized rite. In the time of Jesus, the Jewish faith was more dynamic in its control of the masses than his own, the proof of which is his lonely death upon the cross, but was its dynamic popularity any evidence of its superiority or truth? The world has great reason to examine "dynamic" beliefs with scrupulous care. Men may become more intolerantly zealous for a mythological fiction than for scientific truth. The dynamic qualities of this dogmatic belief as well as the evidence offered in the experience of the convert, we may dismiss as proofs, and regard them both as fallacious reasons for maintaining a belief that lacks sound historical support.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain our most accurate records of the historical Jesus and in them both he and his family appear to be unaware of any constitutional difference between himself and other men.

His prayer was, "Not my will be done but thine," words that would be meaningless on the lips of one conscious of being himself God, as would also his words of anguish, "my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He leads his disciples in prayer to "Our Father," calling Him "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." Even the enconium, "Good Master," offends his sense of fitness and he replies, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, even God."

As McGiffert says: "Summing it all up, we must say that Jesus' idea of God was wholly Jewish . . . The personal disciples of Jesus, Jews as they were by birth and training, naturally shared his belief in the God of Israel . . . At any rate there is no reason for supposing that the early Jewish disciples deified Jesus, or thought of him as anything more than God's servant and anointed. They had known him in the flesh, a man among men; with their Jewish traditions the last thing they could have thought of was to count him a divine being or to identify him with God."[9] If this be true, then they were unitarian in their belief about Christ and if he did not attempt personally to eradicate that heresy from their minds, it must have been because he was satisfied with it and made no other kind of belief essential to discipleship.

The Fourth Gospel interpreted Christ to the Greek world in the terms of their current philosophy, as the manifestation of the immanent Logos, but still the Life that was in him is the same as "the Light that enlighteneth every man coming into the world." His preeminence is that of the first among equals and his relation to God is that of a man in whom the Divine Logos, from whom all derive life, might be most clearly known. As such, he prays to the Father, "This is eternal life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ."

[9] A. C. McGiffert: The God of the Early Christians, pp. 21, 22.

The writer assumes that the Jews would not understand this Greek philosophy of the Divine Immanence in humanity, as they were accustomed to think of God as transcendent and afar off, or present only in sacred places like the temple. In affirming that the Divine Life was minifested in Jesus, as also it might be manifested in a lesser degree in other men, the writer is conscious that the Jews would violently dissent. Crediting Jesus with being a teacher of this Johannine religious philosophy, he represents the Jews as enraged with him on that account. When Jesus then asks them why they condemn him for saying that God was in him and he in God, they reply, "Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Instead of confirming their conclusion, however, Jesus repudiates it as a complete misunderstanding of the truth the writer is trying to present. He recalls the fact that in their own sacred books it was said of men "ye are gods." Why then, he argues should they consider it a blasphemy if he as a man conscious of the Divine Immanence, should call himself a "son of God"? He bluntly calls them the children of the devil and says that is why they are unable to understand the truth about the sons of God. The later dogma of the Church, ignoring his disclaimer, took over the misunderstanding of the people, which he rebuked, saying that after all it was the truth, and solemnly affirmed that he *did* make himself God and *was* God. If that were the truth, why did he implicitly deny it?

Parananda, the Hindu commentator, interprets the incident with understanding in saying, "Jesus meant to say that the popular idea of the Jews that God was far away from man somewhere beyond the clouds, was a great mistake, and that the truth was that God has been connected with the spirit of every man inseparably from eternity. Only, the worldly man is much too blind to perceive the connection in his own case, whereas to the

spiritual man no fact is more patent than that the Father is in him and he is in the Father."[10]

"If the great sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel have any intelligible meaning," says Dr. Stanley Hall, "it is that the way to God is that which opens within the depths of the human soul. The true son of God reaches, communes and unites with Him by mystic inner experience."[11] Apparent inability to grasp and hold steadfast this faith that God, whose spiritual life revealed in holy love Jesus found within himself, is the same God whose spirit manifests itself in the experience of all who possess that love, drives men to deny the normal human experience of Jesus, in order to affirm his unique experience as Deity in human form.

How then did it come to pass that he whom Peter called "the man approved by God," became for the Church the God approved by man?

It might be noted that divine terms could in the ancient world be very loosely used and were often applied to men. The decrees of the Roman Emporer opened with the words, "Our Lord and God commands." Speaking of things "touching the king," even a Jewish poet exclaims, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." The incident recalled by Christ has been already mentioned, in which it was said of men, "ye are gods." This use of language was customary in the early Church. Origen said, "In another sense God is said to be an immortal, rational, moral being. In this sense every gentle soul is God." Athanasius said of Christ, "He was made man that we might be made God." Clement speaks of the soul as "training itself to be God," and says, "that man with whom the Logos dwells is made like God and is beautiful . . . that man becomes God, for God so wills it." Theophilus writes, "that man may be keeping the commandments of God receive immortality and be-

[10]Sri Parananda: The Gospel of John, p. 201.
[11]G. Stanley Hall: Jesus Christ in the Light of Psychology, II, p. 352.

come God." Hippolytus says of a man, "For thou hast become God. Thou wast deified in being born into immortality." This usage was sanctioned by current thought. As Angus remarks, "According to Greek, and even Latin theology, the gods differed from men only in being immortal. Consequently, to render a mortal immortal was to deify him."[12] "If we try to analyze the concept, God, thus loosely and widely used," says Dean Inge, "we find that the prominent idea was that exemption from the doom of death was the prerogative of a divine being, and that the gift of immortality is itself deification."[13]

If we would understand the writers of that age we must beware of giving the literal modern meaning to the terms they use. That one could be spoken of as God, without any thought of him being more than a man of extraordinary power or as possessing the gift of immortality, is apparent. In harmony with this Greek usage, Thomas might be led to exclaim at a vision of the "risen Christ," "my Lord and my God," without having in mind any more than the idea of one who had certainly entered on the life of the immortals. In such words he might confess his belief that Jesus had conquered death without compromising his Jewish faith in the one God, who is the Father of all.

In comparison with the extreme language quoted, which might be properly applied to an immortal man, the language of Paul exhibits careful restraint, when he says that, though Jesus was born of the seed of David, yet was he declared to be the "son of God by the resurrection from the dead." To Paul he is "the Messiah, son of the Living God." Though he pays him the highest honor, he explicitly declares, "There is one God, the Father—and one mediator between God and man, *himself man,* Jesus the Messiah."

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[12]S. Angus: The Mystery-Religions and Christianity, p. 106 ff.
[13]W. R. Inge: Christian Mysticism, p. 357.

In the first chapter allusion was made to the fact that in the belief of the first disciples Jesus was to become the Messianic king, whom God would set on the throne of David, to "reign over the House of Israel." "This Jesus God hath made both Lord and Messiah," was the first gospel message. The faith of Christ himself had centered in the Fatherhood of God, but as McGiffert says, "Not the Fatherhood of God but the Messiahship of Jesus formed the burden of the preaching of the apostles and so the Master's estimate of values was reversed."[14]

What kind of a person was this Messiah to be? Opinions differed. Some expected him to be a natural descendant of the family of David, a mighty warrior, by whom God would "shatter unrighteous rulers." Others were frankly pessimistic about the outcome of any military conflict with the great heathen empires unless Israel were led by a being of angelic power, able to overthrow kingdoms by the word of his mouth. The seers predicted that such a person would make his advent and called him "the Elect One" and "the Son of God." In fourth Ezra, God is said to speak of the coming one as "My Son, the Messiah." The writer of the Book of Enoch tells how he was permitted to see this Heavenly Messiah and was told that "this Son of Man whom thou hast seen shall put down kings and the mighty from their seats and shall break the teeth of sinners." In the Apocalypse of Ezra he is the "One whom the Highest has long held in reserve, through whom He will deliver creation and who will establish a new social order." In the Sybilline Oracles, it was written, "There came from the vault of heaven a blessed man, who bore the sceptre given him by God and brought all things under his power."[15]

"If we would appreciate justly the early church which

[14]A. C. McGiffert: The Apostolic Age, p. 54.
[15]Jackson and Lake: The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 370; Otto Pfleiderer: Primitive Christianity, III, p. 80 ff.; S. J. Case: The Revelation of John, p. 78 ff.

gathered in Jerusalem around the Twelve," says Dobschutz, "we must think of all its members as pious Jews. The certainty that the Messiah had appeared in Jesus of Nazareth only impelled them to redouble their pious zeal and to strive after the realization of the Jewish ideal of piety."[16] "Readjustments are made," says Case, "to suit the Christian situation, but still the gospel portrait of the heavenly Son of Man to come on clouds of glory, the description in the Acts of the appointed Messiah on whose coming awaits the restoration of all things, the Pauline Messiah to be revealed in judgment, the reigning Messiah of the Apocalypse, all hark back to the apocalyptic conceptions of the later Judaism. Quite apart from the much debated question of Jesus' own idea of his messianic program, it is perfectly clear that his disciples after his death evaluated his personality by means of the current Jewish coinage."[17]

Paul carried this general conception of Messiah-Jesus to its loftiest height. He says that he worshiped "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, he thought of God as Jesus did and worshiped him as Jesus taught. To him there was "one God,—and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah or Christ." They were two distinct persons, and the Messiah was the heaven-sent vicegerent of the Father who would eventually rule the world. But he conceived the work of the Messiah in cosmic terms, though his universe was the tiny one of ancient thought, with the earth as the center and the scene of most of the divine activities. This "man from heaven" was to Paul "the second Adam," in whose image man had been first created, and his mission was to restore to men all that had been lost by them in the Fall of the first Adam. He was the appointed leader of men and angels in the campaign being waged to deliver all creation from the terror and reign of the demons who infested the air and obsessed

[16]E. Dobschutz: Christian Life in the Primitive Church, p. 141.
[17]S. J. Case: The Evolution of Christianity, p. 105.

men to do evil. Having conquered them he would deliver up the kingdom to the Father that "God might be all in all." Taking over the entire Jewish mythology, Paul enthrones the Messianic Jesus as Lord of the world he came to save, and the mediatorial man in the work of reconciliation between God and men. Paul does not confine the reign of the Messiah within Hebrew boundaries. His Israel is to be composed of all of every nation who will enlist under his banner in faith and obey his orders. Then like him they will learn that the indwelling spirit of God, which was in Jesus, will be in them also making them "heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" of the kingdom. Like their Master they will learn to think of God as "Abba, Father." The destiny of men is to be conformed ultimately to the image of Christ, for he was "the firstborn of many brethren."

Yet, as Peabody observes, "This exaltation of Christ as conceived by Paul does not reach the point at which the church was to arrive. The Deity of Christ was not a Pauline doctrine. 'A Hebrew of the Hebrews,' could not so far depart from his faith in 'one God, the Father, from whom all come and for whom all exist'. . . . God to Paul was the transcendent source; Christ the intermediary agent."[18]

Traditional interpretations in favor of the later dogma still have such vogue that they are apt to obscure the argument of Paul. He developed the doctrine that had come down to him as a Jew, concerning the heavenly Messiah and interpreted Jesus according to the principles of his own religious philosophy. That philosophy, however, forbade him to identify Jesus with the God he served. "Paul as a Jew," says Weiss, "believed in the heavenly Messiah; to him it was already an article of faith that the Son of God was in heaven in divine form and was thereafter to reveal himself. When, therefore, this "heavenly man" appeared to Paul, the zealous

[18]F. G. Peabody: The Apostle Paul and the Modern World, p. 160.

student of the law, the revelation might certainly imply the considerable strengthening of his faith."[19] "Paul believed in such a celestial being, in a divine Christ," says Wrede, "before he believed in Jesus. Until he became a Christian it seemed a sacrilege to call Jesus the Christ. But in the moment of his conversion, when Jesus appeared before him in the shining glory of his risen existence, Paul identified him with his own Christ and straightway transferred to Jesus all the conceptions he already had of the celestial being."[20]

Thus, according to this apostle who had looked for the appearing of a celestial Messiah, Jesus had been declared to be this "son of God" by his resurrection from the dead. He had appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, manifested his love and the spiritual life possible to man, and having shown the glory possible to men who would like him become the sons of God, he died and returned to glory. "Paul does not, like the later theologians," says Beyschlag, "start in his picture of Christ from an idea of God and the Trinity, nor does he add a human nature with soul and spirit to a divine person, nor does he think of that person as changed into a man, but he simply in thought raises the historical 'Jesus Christ' into eternity."[21] In this way Paul gave a new theology to the earlier Galilean disciples, for as Bacon says, "If we take the entire Synoptic contents as they stand, we cannot discern a trace of the Pauline doctrine of pre-existence and incarnation, and only the faintest traces, in crudest form, of a doctrine of the atonement."[22]

"St. Paul's thesis," says Wernle, "is an exceedingly surprising one, but it bears the marks of a man of genius. The Son of God became a man such as we are that we men might become sons of God such as he is. . . . Jesus, while on earth, was for him a man, not man and

[19] J. Weiss: Paul and Jesus, p. 27.
[20] W. Wrede: Paul, p. 151 ff.
[21] W. Beyschlag: New Testament Theology, II, p. 83.
[22] B. W. Bacon: Art, in Jesus or Christ, p. 210.

Son of God, first flesh and then spirit, not both together . . . God is in nowise drawn down into the world of natural phenomena, the thought of an incarnation of deity would have been pure blasphemy to St. Paul. It is not God but the Son of God alone who descends into this world. . . The way in which however St. Paul imparts an ethical meaning to the myth is very admirable."[23] In this Man from Heaven, the Son of God, par excellence, men might behold an image of God the Father, and learn that they are "foreordained to be conformed to the image of the Son, that he might be called the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 28). In those who have such faith in Christ that they yield their lives to his Lordship, the Spirit of God operates to raise them into likeness to Christ "and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." When they are perfected through suffering and obedience, they "will all attain unto a fullgrown manhood, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

The churches founded by Paul in Greek cities flourished, and a generation after his death a new theology arose among them. The doctrine about Jesus in the Jewish Christian Church had been moulded by the traditional beliefs about the Messiah, but these ideas were alien to the Greek mind. They were superseded very largely by a new interpretation of Jesus and human life, at which we may now briefly glance.

The classical authority for this new theology is the Fourth Gospel, written by a scholarly disciple in Ephesus. In the synoptic gospels, that is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have Jesus presented to the Jews as the promised Messiah, in fulfillment of prophecy. In the Fourth Gospel this Messiah, glorified by Paul as a celestial Man from Heaven, and the vehicle through whom God conveys the life-giving spirit to men, is

[23]Paul Wernle: Beginnings of Christianity, I, p. 251.

identified with the Logos or Word of Greek speculative thought. The Greek speculations in regard to the Logos were thus transferred to Jesus, the Heavenly Messiah. "No scholar of our time, however, conservative," remarks Bacon, "questions the essential propriety of the principle that the simple facts of Jesus' earthly career are to be sought in the Synoptic tradition rather than in the Fourth Gospel. The fourth evangelist, no matter by what name we call him, treats his subject in a speculative and theological sense."[24] Or in the words of Scott, "Paul himself had adopted Greek categories into his thinking, but his system as a whole was Jewish in character, imperfectly intelligible to the Hellenic mind. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, not content with employing a Greek idea here and there, attempts an entire restatement of the Christian message in terms of the current philosophy. Jesus, according to the primitive tradition, was the Messiah who had come to inaugurate the promised kingdom of God. In the Fourth Gospel the Messianic idea is replaced by that of the Logos. The proclamation of the kingdom becomes a message of "eternal life." Jewish conceptions are translated in almost every instance into the language of Greek speculation."[25] What this meant we now inquire.

In Israel, as Marti says, "The God of the whole world becomes an altogether transcendent deity. . . .and in the cultus a carefully graded hierarchy intervenes between the layman and God."[26] The approach to deity was to be made through priestly mediators and no immanent and vital union was predicated between the divine Sovereign and His subjects. God was in heaven and men on earth, with angelic and priestly intermediaries in between, the chief of whom was the Messiah reserved in heaven. The Law had been handed down and the Messiah should come from above, descending into the

[24]B. W. Bacon: Art. in Jesus or Christ, p. 210.
[25]E. F. Scott: The Fourth Gospel, p. 6.
[26]Karl Marti: Religion of the Old Testament, p. 220.

world to impose the will of God on men with authority.

Some of the Greek philosophers interpreted the relation between God and the world in a quite different manner. They familiarized men with two great conceptions—the Logos and the cosmos. The universe, they said, is a beautiful and ordered system or cosmos, deriving its life and energy from the Indwelling Logos, or life or reason of God. Composed of eternal matter, the universe is itself chaotic, senseless and evil, but the animating Soul of all things, bringing order out of chaos, is the Creative Logos, the divine Spirit of Reason and Good, pervading all. Whether this World-Soul was an impersonal principle or a personal being emanating from the Supreme Being was the subject of much speculation. To the Stoics the Logos was of the nature of an immanent and self-revealing deity, abiding as a creative power in all things and revealing his character most clearly in the heart and mind of man. According to Epictetus, man is a "fragment of God" and "in his individual life may lift himself above all that limits him and realize his identity with this Logos which resides in the soul, and is also the governing principle of the universe."[27]

Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Paul, sought to harmonize these ideas of the Greek philosophy with the Jewish religion. Though the Supreme God be remote from the world, the Logos is present in the world and in man. "There is one God," he wrote, "but this one God has about Him innumerable powers as helpers and saviours of all created existences. . . . By these powers the incorporeal intelligible world was built, which is the pattern of the phenomenal world." These powers that do the bidding of God took the place of the old nature-deities. The highest of all, and the life of all is the Logos. "He is the eldest or first-born Son of God," said Philo, "the oldest of the angels, the Beginning, the Word and Name of God, the Image of God and the Prototype of man."[28]

[27] E. F. Scott: The Fourth Gospel, p. 147.
[28] Otto Pfleiderer: Primitive Christianity, III, p. 36 ff.

"The fundamental conception of Philo," says Thilly, "is the idea of God. God is the absolutely transcendent Being, so far above us that we cannot comprehend or define Him. We know that He is but not what He is. . God is too exalted to come into contact with impure matter. In order to explain His action in the world, Philo assumes intermediate powers. Sometimes these powers are properties of God. . . All such powers he combines into one, the Logos, the Divine Reason or Wisdom, the Power of powers, the highest of the angels, the first-born Son of God, the Image of God, the Second God, the God-man, the Heavenly Adam. . . And using the Logos as His organ, God fashioned the world of visible things, which are copies or images of ideas. . . . Philo's Logos is the Stoic World-Soul or the Platonic world of ideas made into a being intermediate between God and man."[29]

"The central thought of Philo's system," says Bentwich, "is that God is immanent is all His works, but it would seem sacrilegious to apply to the Godhead itself this universal, unceasing activity, and so he develops the Logos as the most ideal attribute of Deity, and the sum of all His immanence and effluence . . . The Logos is only the immanent manifestation of the one God, who is both immanent and transcendent."[30]

This doctrine was taken over from philosophy and given a home in Christian thought, with momentous results. The Heavenly Messiah mediating between God and men had retained Jewish lineaments not entirely acceptable to the Greeks, and as time elapsed and He did not return as announced, they sought out substitute interpretations, more congenial to their way of thinking. The Christian life patterned after the example of Christ went on unchanged, but another theology arose couched in terms of another school of thought. He who had been at first proclaimed as the Messiah or Christ in the

[29]Frank Thilly: History of Philosophy, p. 123.
[30]Norman Bentwich: Philo-Judaeus, p. 153 ff.

terms of Jewish thought, was now to be portrayed as in reality a manifestation of the Logos or immanent Word of God. The life and light of the Logos, of which all men in a measure partake, gained a pure medium of expression in the perfect human life of Jesus. "In the beginning was the Logos (Word) and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God. In him was life and the life was the light of men . . . the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world" (John i.). Not by a genealogy of Jesus, showing his descent from David, as did the other biographers of Jesus, does this Ephesian writer introduce us to the career of Jesus, but undertakes to show that in him the Divine Logos, believed in by the Greeks, and revealed imperfectly in the minds and hearts of men, had become perfectly known in the life of Jesus, "full of grace and truth." The same Logos that was so fully revealed in Christ, operating through his gracious personality, continues to abide in the world to perfect men in his own character like that of Christ. "It is the nomenclature of Platonic Judaism," says Martineau, "nor could the proem (to John's Gospel) have been written where Philo was unknown."[31]

By uniting the attributes of the speculative Logos with those of the Messiah of Jewish myth, a composite portrait of a supernatural Person was produced, who was said to have become incarnate in Jesus. In that union of ideas, the Logos was made more personal and the Messiah more divine. This plunged the church into endless controversies. What was the relation of the Logos to the human soul of Jesus? Had he two natures or one, two wills or one? In what way was the Logos connected with God on the one hand and with Jesus on the other? Was he embodied in Jesus as in other men or in Jesus only? Was he less than the Father or the eternal equal of the Father? Innumerable questions arose to perplex the pious and to involve them in a war of words

[31]James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 468.

and often in physical violence. The simpler faith of Jesus, his plain spiritual theism, became submerged beneath a raging flood of speculative metaphysics and religious philosophies.

As Christianity went on its conquering way through the Greco-Roman world, with its story of the Heavenly Messiah who had come down from heaven to die and rise from the dead in order to save men from sin and death, and who had been identified with the Divine Logos of the philosophers, Jesus Christ came to be regarded in the popular faith as fully entitled to the rank of a new god to be worshiped. The gods of the mystery-religions declined in prestige before the rising reputation of this new divinity. Life and immortality, which men had sought through initiation in the rites of Mithra, Osiris, and Isis, could be obtained as a free gift by all having faith in Jesus. Many of the old pagan beliefs and rites were adopted and transformed by the Church. The Christian sacraments took the place of the old initiatory rites and thus became powerful magic to impart life and immortality to believers. He who had died and risen again was the god foreshadowed by the mysteries. "Every Mystery-Religion" says Angus, "being a religion of Redemption, offered means of suppressing the old man and of imparting or vitalizing the spiritual principle . . . All the Mystery-gods were primarily saviour-gods. To initiation was ascribed a sacramental efficacy which atoned for a man's past, gave him comfort in the present, a participation in the divine life, and assured to faith an hereafter of such dazzling splendour that the trials and conflicts of this earthly existence were dwarfed into insignificance . . . The path to victory of the Christian faith was prepared by the Jewish personal trust in God, to which it had most affinity, and by those mystic aspirations fostered by the Mystery-cults. The idea of faith was "in the air and waiting only an object worthy of it." Christ proved to faith the power of God unto

salvation to a world crying out for Saviour-gods."[32] Brushing to one side the foggy metaphysics of the philosophers as well as the monotheism of Israel and the early Church, the later converts frankly deified Jesus as their God and Saviour, through whom they might gain all the blessings which they had previously sought in vain in the popular religions of the time. They could do this without denying worship also to the Supreme Father, to whom he was subordinate. After his graduation from the ranks of humanity, it was only taking steps in the same direction to replace the other minor deities of their former worship with a hierarchy of saints as objects of adoration and to seek their protection in many prayers. "Mary, Mother of God and Mother of mercy, pray for us," was a petition added to prayers to the Lord Jesus to intercede with his precious blood before God on behalf of men.

Long before the fourth century dawned, as McGiffert has shown, the Gentile Christians "worshiped two divine beings, Son and Father . . . It would not seem strange if many of those coming from the Gentile world, with its saviour-gods and mystery-cults, paid little attention to the monotheism of the Jewish missionaries and accepted Jesus Christ, without accepting, or without retaining, any more. The experience is common with all missionaries and evangelists . . . It would seem that the real god of the theologians as well as of the common people was Jesus Christ. So far as they had any god above him, he was a philosophical being, required only for speculative considerations."[33]

Having united the Messiah of Israel with the Logos of the Greeks in one Person, Jesus Christ, the Greek churches thus worshiped him as a Saviour-god; the Supreme Father was kept in the background, like an Oriental monarch, ruling a subject nation from a distance by a viceroy. The readiness of the people of that time

[32] S. Angus: The Mystery-Religions and Christianity, pp. 95, 137, 297.
[33] A. C. McGiffert: The God of the Early Christians, p. 44 ff.

to interpret events in this fashion was illustrated at Lystra, where the priest of Jupiter brought garlands and oxen and would have sacrificed to, and worshiped, Paul and Barnabas, calling Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercury, the people crying, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts. xiv.). It came about in the same way that Jesus was thought to be a god, the Logos-Messiah, who had come down in the likeness of a man.

Not a few people still follow the example of the ancient pagans. They worship Jesus Christ in the place of God, paying no attention to his own injunction that men should "worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." In the second century Justin Martyr defended this practice and more than once referred to Christ as "another god," though distinguishing him from the Supreme God. Origen, however, did not approve the custom, saying, "If we once understand what prayer is, we shall see that prayer ought never to be offered to any creature, nor even to Christ himself, but only to the God and Father of all, to whom our Saviour also prayed and taught us to pray."[34] "Ultimately," says McGiffert, "as everybody knows, the Christians of the world church had two objects of worship, God and Christ; that is, God the Father and God the Son, both equally divine."[34]

The popular religion of the Church thus developed into a ditheism. "The God of the primitive Gentile Christians, or, at any rate, of many of them, was Jesus Christ; that they began with him and only afterward associated with him the God of the Jews and worshiped two divine beings, Son and Father;" seems to be certain.[34] This grew into a tritheism as the Holy Ghost was raised to the position of a third distinct divine person. The Father was regarded as inaccessible and unknowable apart from the Son; the known God was the Son, the Logos-

[34]Op. cit., pp. 54 ff., 63, 89.

Messiah incarnated in Jesus; while the third divinity was provided to preside over the destinies of the Church and to preserve it from error. In thus doing violence to monotheism, the first principle of the Jewish religion, Gentile Christianity departed farther and farther from the religion of Jesus himself, lost all its appeal for the Jews, then awakened their bitter hostility and alienated them permanently from the greatest prophet of their race. He had failed to prove to their satisfaction that he was Messiah and they were not and are not inclined to worship him as their God.

The intellectualism and religious ideas of the Greeks had invaded the Church and theological speculation aspired in its pride to solve all mysteries, to settle all disputes, and harmonize all differences, on its basic assumption that the Church in its official decisions was protected from error by the Spirit of God. Theologians undertook to define the eternal relations which existed between the Father and the Son, who had been incarnated in Jesus, the Logos-Messiah. On the one hand, it was held that the Father certainly had not been incarnated, but the Son only—hence there must be a distinction of Persons; on the other hand, there was the monotheistic tradition inherited from Israel and taught in the Bible, which must be satisfied—therefore God must in some sense be one person. The Athanasian party of the fourth century undertook to solve the riddle and to save the endangered monotheism of the Church. This was done by the famous formula, based on the Logos philosophy of the intermediate god and the biblical tradition of the one God. The Son was declared to be "one substance" with the Father, who had been mysteriously generated from that substance from eternity, as a Person coequal and coeternal with the Father.

Out of the controversies of the period the Nicene Creed came into existence, formulated by the bishops and adopted by a majority vote. When first introduced it

was met by a storm of angry dissent, but in the end as we learn from the naive confession of Eusebius, "The Emperor succeeded in bringing them into similarity of judgment and conformity of opinion on all controverted points." This creed declares: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty . . . And in one only Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only begotten of the Father, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father . . . who was incarnate and became man . . . And in the Holy Spirit." This remains the fundamental creed of Christian orthodoxy. Other creeds afterward further elaborated the subject to show that the Father is God, and Christ is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but only one. Out of the verbal blending of the Three in One it was sought to sanction both the worship of Christ as God and to preserve the strict monotheism of Israel. Philosophical speculation offered the ripened product of its own creation as an authoritative interprtation of divine metaphysics and the bishops declared that their theological conclusions were inspired and kept free from error by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The aim all through was to satisfy all parties, if possible, by admitting the essential truth in contradictory contentions. The Jewish monotheist was to be satisfied by the statement that there is one God, the Father Almighty; the Greek by the statement that the Logos or Son is also God generated from the substance of the Father; and the worshiper of the Savior-God with the statement that the divine Logos had been incarnated in Jesus only. This creed so made was promulgated as the final authority for the Christian faith.

Speaking of this conclusion, Armstrong says: "By a bold and uncompromising defiance of rationality, by divesting Jesus Christ of every vestige of real humanity, by ascribing to him every attribute of God, it strove to

silence the controversies of two hundred years. It left Jesus Christ with a human nature only nominally human. It destroyed the beautiful, but unstable, conception of the Fourth Evangelist, of the Thought of God entering into a veritable and real human being. It left the church, now bound and pledged to the alliance with the State to face the centuries bearing on her shoulders the burden of a doctrine intrinsically unthinkable, and to be maintained alone by stamping rationality as rebellion against the God of reason."[35]

Following the Council of Nicea, the Emperor decreed, in the interest of imperial unity and religious uniformity, that all books opposing the orthodox formula should be burned and that death should be the penalty for persistence in possessing them. This was the beginning of a resolute effort to crush dissent with force and to make liberty of thought impossible. From 326 to 435 A.D. no less than one hundred and forty imperial laws of repression were enacted, preparing the way for the pillage and murder of heretics for a thousand years.[36] "We the three Emperors," reads the edict of 381 A.D., "will that our subjects believe in the one divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of majesty coequal in the Holy Trinity. . . We brand all the senseless followers of other religions by the infamous name of heretics and forbid their conventicles to use the name of churches. We reserve their punishment to the just vengeance of heaven and to such measures as divine inspiration shall dictate to us."[37] This was the way that the Church, with the aid of the secular arm of the State, sought to crush opposition to its dogmas.

Not until the Rakovian catechism of the Polish Unitarians was published in 1659 did any organized body of Christians advocate liberty of thought in religion. "While we compose a catechism," they said, "we pre-

[35] R. A. Armstrong: The Trinity and the Incarnation, p. 66.
[36] W. L. Sullivan: From the Gospel to the Creeds, p. 140 ff.
[37] A. N. Blatchford: Church Councils and their Decrees, p. 140.

scribe nothing to any man. While we declare our opinion, we oppress no one. Let everyone enjoy the freedom of his own judgment in religion; only let it be permitted us to exhibit our view of divine things without injuring or calumniating others. For this is the golden liberty of prophesying which the sacred books of the New Testament so earnestly commend to us." But on the revival of orthodox power in that country, these lovers of freedom were harried into exile and their churches confiscated. Let a tree be judged by its fruits.

In his lecture on "Michael Servetus," Sir William Osler describes the martyrdom of that distinguished physician in Protestant Geneva, at the instigation of John Calvin: "The faggots were green, the burning was slow and it was long before in a last agony he cried again, "Jesu, thou son of the Eternal God, have mercy on me." Strange is it not, that could he have cried at that last moment, 'Jesu, thou Eternal Son of God,' even at that last moment, the chains would have been unwound, the chaplet removed and the faggots scattered."[38] Strange indeed! He died, as multitudes of others suffered during the centuries, because he refused to affirm what he could not believe sincerely, namely, that Jesus Christ was one of three equal persons in the Godhead, as stated in the creeds of the churches. As late as 1648, the Protestant Parliament of Great Britain passed a law condemning to death all who failed to hold that faith, though it should be said to the honor of Cromwell that he refused to enforce the law.[39] Not till 1813 was religious toleration fully extended to Unitarians in England. Of the American colony of Maryland, the Catholic Church boasts that it was the first colony to grant religious toleration in the New World. In 1649 a Toleration Act was passed because Protestants had become numerous in the colony. With a Protestant governor and an Assembly about equally composed of Catholics and Protestants, this Act

[38]Sir William Osler: Michael Servetus, p. 4.
[39]J. R. Green: A History of the English People, Book VII.

granted each other equal rights, but Unitarians, Jews and atheists were left unprotected, for it was stipulated that all those who "shall deny the Holy Trinity" shall be put to death.[40]

And the result has been the practical perpetuation of the pagan ditheism of the Greek churches under the verbal forms of monotheism. And if it be deemed a Christian duty in following Christ to worship as he taught and pray to God "our Father," this departure from his teaching should not commend itself as excessive loyalty to Christ. So an eminent scholar recently said that after all the intellectual and physical agony of the centuries in establishing a faith in one God, who is also Three, the net result had been, "The Christian Creed acknowledges but one God and one quality of Godhead, —so far Athanasius won his cause; but the Christian imagination has been driven by this postulate of the impassibility of God to worship two. Side by side, enthroned in heaven sit God the Father, omnipotent, unchangeable, impassible, and on his right hand, God the Son. What is this but Arianism, routed in the field of intellectual definition, triumphing in the more important sphere of the imaginative presentation of the object of belief?"[41]

To the practical materialist all such theorizing appears to be of no account. The student of history, however, cannot concede that it is unimportant. Life is ruled by ideas, and it is a duty to free our minds as much as possible from error. On this subject, as on all others, clear and rational thinking is of priceless value and directly influences the conduct of life. With daring intrepidity our forefathers wrestled with the great problems of philosophy and theology, and we honor neither them nor ourselves by too facile a belief or disbelief of their answers. We should think them out for ourselves, without fear of offending deity by reasonable dissent from

[40] J. H. Crooker: The Winning of Religious Liberty, p. 251.
[41] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God, p. 410, note.

traditional beliefs. In an age of civil and religious liberty it remains a duty to seek truth in the light of all modern knowledge rather than by submission to the dogmatic authority of dead philosophers and saints.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHRIST OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

"Thought answereth alone to thought,
And Soul to soul is kin;
The outward God he findeth not
Who finds not God within."
HOSMER.

The dogmas concerning Christ in the creeds, as we have seen, represent one line of thought that resulted from prolonged effort to combine in one person the Messiah of Jewish faith and the Logos of Greek speculation. The earliest Christian document on the subject is the Fourth Gospel. "The Johannine doctrine," says Weizsacker, "rested on the notion of the Logos held by Alexandrian Judaism, by which it had been used to transform the old faith in God into a philosophy intended to solve the whole problem of the universe, and to recommend that faith to heathen thinkers . . . The novel element added to Philo's doctrine of the Logos was neither more or less than that the Messiah, the manifested Son of God, was the Logos."[1] "This doctrine of the Logos," says Scott, "borrowed through Philo from the Greek philosophical thinkers, had nothing to do with the original Christian message. The evangelist (John) has grasped intuitively in the experience of faith certain truths which he endeavours to interpret by means of the accepted philosophy of the age. That philosophy has in great part lost its meaning to us."[2] In its original form the doctrine of the Logos or Reason of God manifested in the universe, was an effort to impress the thought of the age with the belief that all the order and beauty of

[1]Carl Weizsacker: The Apostolic Age, p. 227.
[2]E. F. Scott: The Fourth Gospel, pp. 13, 372.

nature were traceable to an immanent Deity as their source. It argued in this way: "The forces of the universe form one all-pervasive Force and this principle is rational, the active soul of the world. It must be one, because the universe is a unity . . . It is reason, intelligent, purposeful and good—because the universe is a cosmos, a beautiful, well-ordered and perfect whole. All life and movement have their source in it; it is God . . . the world is the body of God, a living organism. It is the soul or logos of the universe."[3] The Stoics we are told, "spiritualized the Logos doctrine of Heraclitus and taught that there is one God who pervades all the universe, and whom all men may regard as Father."[4]

As matter was conceived to be an eternally existing and inert substance, essentially evil and intractable in its constitution, out of which the Divine Logos must shape the well-ordered cosmos, speculative thought dissociated the Logos from the supreme God for the task of sustaining and ruling the cosmos. Absolute Deity was supposed to be too high and holy to dwell, without contamination, in the material universe, and so delegated this function to the emanation from His substance, the Logos or Son. In this way the momentous step was taken toward the idea that there is a personal distinction between the God outside the universe and the God within the universe. To Philo the Logos meant "the effluence of God, either in the whole universe or the individual man, filling the one as the other with the Divine Shekinah . . . The individual man has within him a permanent Divine Logos by which he may direct his conduct aright."[5]

With these ideas to guide him, the writer of the Fourth Gospel offered his interpretation of Jesus and of Christian experience. In the Logos or World-Soul "was Life and the Life was the Light of men . . . the true Light

[3]Frank Thilly: History of Philosophy, p. 109.
[4]W. K. Wright: The Student's Philosophy of Religion, p. 119.
[5]Norman Bentwich: Philo-Judaeus, p. 149 ff.

that lighteth every man coming into the world." The world had but dimly comprehended this Life of all living things, manifesting itself supremely in the minds and hearts of men. That which was vaguely revealed in others was fully manifested in Jesus. The immanent God, whose life is in all, came clearly into the field of human knowledge by focusing his grace and truth in Christ. To the Messiah of Israel was given the honor of revealing in human form the Logos of the Greeks.

The next step was not difficult. It was soon taken by the Church. The Messiah was a person distinct from God, so the Logos must likewise be. He was a second person exercising creative power derived from God in the world. But since he was by nature an eternal effluence from God, he must be of the same substance as God and in a sense God also. In his own distinct person he was incarnated in Jesus only, though his life was present in all men. Soon another step was taken. As his incarnation in his own distinct person was in Jesus only, the presence of his life in men generally was referred to a third being who was conceived as proceeding from both him and the Father. The holy Spirit, which the Jews believed to be the outpouring of God's power in the world, and not the Logos, Christian speculation thus made the immanent God in human life. The functions of the Logos-Son were divided and part of them taken over by the Holy Spirit, conceived as a third divine being. Out of these materials of speculative metaphysics the dogma of the Trinity was developed, with its associated dogma of the incarnation of the Second Person in Jesus only.

Whether we shall take the unitarian or the trinitarian view of Christ depends ultimately upon the underlying philosophy which best satisfies our minds. We may with Jesus and Paul think of God as simply "Our Father," the Eternal and Holy Spirit, "in whom we live and move and have our being," and say "there is one

God, the Father, who is over all and through all and in all"; and in that case we shall make no distinction of persons between the transcendent God over all and the immanent God in all. The creative energy in the universe and the divine life imparted to men are the same power of God, whether manifested in the heavens or in Christ or in men. In that case we shall follow the Jewish and earliest Christian tradition and prefer the unitarian position. Or we may take these old Greek speculations as a revelation of reality, and following them, picture to ourselves some eternal personal distinctions in the Godhead, so that the Father is conceived to be outside the known universe altogether, far out of our reach, delegating the work of creation to a second person, the Logos or Son, who in turn deputizes the immanent Spirit to abide in the lives of men. Then we may go on to say that the second person incarnated himself once in the form of a man and after a limited residence in the flesh, returned to the bosom of the Father. In such a case we should prefer the tradition of the Greco-Roman churches and find ourselves in the trinitarian position. I cannot believe that the salvation of any man depends upon the particular explanation of the mysteries of the universe, which he prefers as most satisfactory to him. We move here in a region of abstruse speculative metaphysics, and equally learned and sincere men have differed and will continue to differ. So far as the Bible is concerned, its writers seem to approximate more closely to the Jewish faith in the unity of God than to the personal distinctions in the substance of God of later speculation.

"If we take the Logos doctrine," says Leighton, "to express our faith in the continuous and increasing manifestation of God in nature and humanity, then it has both a religious and philosophic value. If we take it as implying a distinct and separate mediator between the unknowable and unapproachable God, it has no religious

or philosophical value for a scientific thinker, who will think things out to the end. . . We cannot admit that Jesus Christ was the solitary exception to the laws of personality. . . We must begin with the human Jesus; finding incarnated in him the supreme moral and spiritual values, finding in him our elder brother, we can say the Divine Life, the Ground, and Source of all spiritual values, is most fully embodied in him, that he is the first-born of many brethren. . . The Divine in man, which in other men is less clearly embodied in various degrees, in some almost effaced, has its consummate expression in him. . . He is "God incarnate," not by being isolated from other human beings, but by being the fullest, the most perfect incarnation in human personality of those spiritual capacities which are latent and obscured in other men."[6] It is doubtful, indeed, whether the writer of the Fourth Gospel intended to convey anything more. Progressive Christianity parts company with creedal Christianity in returning to this human Christ, in whom the immanent Life of God is seen imparting spiritual values to men, operating in others the same as in Christ. To the one form of thought Christ is the revelation of the possibilities of the spiritual life latent in normally born humanity; to the other, he is the incarnation of an Eternal Person, the equal of the Father, in one man only, who was constitutionally different from all others for he was both "Very God and Very Man."

The trouble with the latter conception always has been the incompatibility of the two terms. That, human life is born, in some sense, out of the divine life, and that the very being of God pervades all creation as its indwelling energy and mind—while an inscrutable mystery —is at least an intelligible conception. In the growing complexities of nature, in the unfolding mind of man, in the emergence of love and the moral virtues as the

[6]Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Modern Mind, p. 153.

supreme experience of human life, we may witness the thoughts of God taking objective forms through the immanence of a Divine Presence. We are unable to explain what we perceive, but with Martineau we may be able to say, "The causality of the world, therefore, is at the disposal of the all-Holy Will; and whether within or without us, in the distant stellar spaces or in the self-conscious life of the tempted or aspiring mind, we are in one divine embrace."[7] To know God best, it is then essential to find His revelation within "the pure in heart, for they shall see God." From this point of view the immanent life of God can best be known where human life is purest, least obscured by selfishness, and most fully permeated with love. If that kind of human life was most perfectly manifested by Christ, then he becomes the one in whom the quality of the Creative Life in all may be most clearly seen. But when we leave this philosophy behind and think of the immanent deity as a person distinct from the Father-God, as the self-directing Logos or Son, who exiles himself for a season from his divine glory to incarnate himself in one man, who is also God, and not merely a godlike man, we are confused by a contradiction of terms.

The answers given to the insistent demands to rationalize this dogma of the Incarnation of God, the Son, illustrate the extraordinary resources of theological argument. The most popular of these is known as the doctrine of the "kenosis." Some acquaintance with it is necessary in order to understand the difficulties raised by this article of faith.

The theory of the "kenosis" is based upon Paul's belief that the "Man from Heaven" or the Heavenly Messiah, laid aside his preëxistent glory and emptied himself of all the prerogatives he possessed in heaven, in order to appear as he did, stripped of them, in human flesh. God, the Eternal Son, divested of his divine

[7]James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 83.

attributes temporarily, his deity shrunk to manhood proportions, albeit perfect manhood, submitted to ignorance and other limitations of humanity during his stay in the flesh, though without sin. After his death he resumed the divine attributes previously belonging to him, adding them to, without losing, his manhood and became God once more.

"In some way incomprehensible to us," says Beet, "the Son of God at his incarnation laid aside for a time and for our salvation the full exercise of his divine intelligence and accepted a pure human mind as the channel of his knowledge."[8] "We face in Christ," says Forsythe, "a Godhead self-reduced but real. . . By his own will, God in Christ reduced his intelligence from being actual to being potential. . . .while from that potentiality, as Christ grew in grace, it developed and regained omniscience, by living it back."[9] "The Gospels," writes Mackintosh, "reveal the outcome of the divine act of self-abnegation. . . It is a life wholly restrained within the limits of manhood. Outside the conditions imposed by his choice of life as a man, the Son had no activity or knowledge. Some writers contend that to the end Christ remained unaware of his being God in the flesh, urging that on no other terms can we assert the genuinely human character of his experience."[10] "He never shows," declares Bishop Gore, "any sign of transcending the knowledge of natural things possible to his age, country and condition. How can these things be reconciled with his personal Godhead? The Divine Son in becoming a man, we conclude, must have accepted voluntarily and deliberately, the limitations involved in really living as a man, being anxious and tried as a man. . . We should believe that Christ was really God and so knew himself, but that Godhead was submitting to the limitations of manhood."[11]

[8]J. Agar Beet: Through Christ to God, pp. 409–416.
[9]P. T. Forsythe: The Place and Person of Jesus Christ, pp. 31, 294.
[10]H. R. Mackintosh: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, p. 470.
[11]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, pp. 225–227.

On the one hand, if he realized that from all eternity he had been God and would soon resume again the omnipotence and omniscience of God, he certainly was not and could not have thought of himself as a normal man. As well might a millionaire masquerading in rags try to imagine himself to be in reality a beggar, knowing that next week he could appear the bank and claim unlimited funds. On the other hand, if he believed nothing of the kind and did not know that he had been God but possessed only the natural faculties common to men, what man has since had the ability to discover what he did not himself know? It would surely then be no impiety to think of him as he thought of himself.

As Lewis says, "We must regard as wholly unintelligible the Kenotic assumption that Eternal Mind can forget . . . It is hardly fair to tell us that this is a mystery that we must be satisfied to accept, when we have no evidence that such was a fact, and when the mystery is itself the offspring of a theory that can never be substantiated."[12]

By such intellectual legerdemain, unequalled since Homer sang the exploits of gods who walked incognito among men, theology strips Jesus of all the attributes of God, while assuring us at the same time that he never ceased to be God. This strange theory of the Incarnation exercises an extraordinary influence over some minds. It enables them to use unitarian language in regard to the earthly Christ, while they can retain the trinitarian faith in regard to the heavenly Christ. They can admit that it was true that while on earth he was "a mere man"; but in heaven he has resumed his position as the Second Person of the Eternal Trinity. But he who was able to forget for a time that he had been God, might also be able to forget that he had been man. The gift of voluntary amnesia is not an agreeable one to contemplate in Deity. And if he did not forget that the

[12]Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 279.

attributes of God were his as a birthright, then we have a Divine Being going through the empty pretence of an unreal manhood. The theory cannot stand upon its own feet; it is nothing but a crutch for a crippled faith, enabling one to say, "Yes, I believe that Jesus was God, but I know that he was also a man."

By relying upon one or another form of this theory, many modern writers are able to maintain a reputation for being sound Trinitarians, while conceding fully all that the Unitarians have claimed in regard to the Prophet of Nazareth. To illustrate, I select at random a few passages from recent works on the subject, "The belief concerning Jesus is not that God in all his absoluteness, omniscience and omnipotence took on the form of a man and walked among men in Galilee . . . but it is the belief that God was in Christ, so far as God can manifest himself in a human personality."[13] "We think of the consciousness of our Lord as entirely human . . . The life of our Lord, so far as it was visible, was a strictly human life; he was as the creeds teach, Very Man; there is nothing to prevent us speaking of this human life of his as we should speak of the life of one of ourselves."[14] "A man of deep personal religion, he had learned to depend upon God, and not in vain . . . More and more the divine power for the spiritual life became immanent in the life of Jesus, in response to his opening of his life to God . . . And this does not mean that Jesus was or is the God upon whom as a thoroughly human and religious man he was dependent in such a way as to be a true pattern for all his fellowmen."[15] "His life on earth was unequivocally human . . . Jesus was a Jew of the first century."[16] "Thus as to his knowledge we have no need to assume omniscience, or any knowledge that is beyond the limits

[13]The Divinity of Christ, by professors of Andover Theological Seminary, p. 177.
[14]William Sanday: Christologies, p. 167.
[15]D. C. Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, p. 118.
[16]H. R. Mackintosh: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, p. 469.

of a perfectly human life."[17] "As Jesus was not omnipresent in his earthly life, so neither was he omiscient or omnipotent . . . In respect of power and knowledge he was made "like unto his brethren," instead of remaining like his Father."[18] "But Jesus was the Lord, almighty in his love, although he restrained, concealed, as it were, his omnipotence in the days of his earthly life."[19] "He emptied himself of divine prerogatives so far as was involved in really becoming a man . . . so in his earthly state we should believe that Christ was really God and so knew himself, but that Godhead was submitting to the limitations of humanity."[20]

Such concessions to the facts of history are characteristic of much that is called "Modernism." In some way inconceivable to us Jesus was able to be a man on earth —a Jew of the first century, but a God in heaven. This fact might have been unknown to him in which case his knowledge was inferior to that of the theologians who discovered it from the philosophy of Greece. The result of such reasoning is a pseudo-Unitarianism, which can justify itself in going on with the repetition of the traditional creeds. It is in fact neither truly Unitarian nor genuinely Trinitarian, but an unstable compromise between the two. The normal manhood of Jesus is compromised. He is neither God nor man, but either a man who knew that he had been God and would be so again; or a man who was destined to become God again and was not aware of it.

This review enables us to understand in some measure the changing theology of our time. As George Harris has said, "It was the common belief a century ago that Jesus was God. While theologians disclaimed a mathematical Trinity, saying there were not three Gods, but one God; they believed that Jesus, when on earth, had

[17] E. S. Drown: The Creative Christ, p. 152.
[18] W. N. Clarke: Outlines of Christian Theology, p. 299.
[19] R. Seeberg: The Fundamentals of the Christian Religion, p. 218.
[20] Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, pp. 226, 227.

all the attributes of God, that he was omniscient and omnipotent . . . And now, though there are many who retain the old view, the theologians, thinkers and scholars of the Church believe that Christ was under the actual limitations of human nature. He gained knowledge as other men did; he shared the opinions of his times as to the universe, and in other respects was truly human."[21] To that extent the unitarian conception of Christ has been conceded to be valid.

Every form of the traditional dogma, however, requires belief in the Deity of Christ, which in some way separates him from all other men. In him we are to see a divine avatar, a visitor to the shores of earth from another world. Whether he retains full orbed all the attributes of Deity, or suppresses them temporarily, he is manifesting a life that is in himself alone and that makes him divine in a sense that can never be true of another. He is not a normal product of humanity. Others may be the sons of God, but he is in reality God, the Son.

Such a belief moves us to say with Sir Henry Jones, "By making the relation of Jesus to God unique, the idealistic light which he threw on human nature is obscured. Did Jesus reveal his own divine nature only, or did he in doing so lift away the limits of man's littleness, reveal in man also the existence of a nature of such intrinsic worth, possibilities so vast, aims so great, that the phrase "mere man" will seem to imply a blasphemy against human nature? The basis of the thought of Jesus is that man is not merely the creature but the son of God. This sonship Jesus claims for himself that he may claim it for men. . . With the divine on the side of Jesus and confronting us, we cannot be required, and it is not in our power, to follow his example. . . If the possession of reason places the example of man beyond the reach of the animal, the solitary possession of the

[21]George Harris: A Century's Change in Religion, p. 87.

divine places Jesus not less beyond ours. . . But reject the isolation of Jesus, let the divine that was on his side be on our side also, maintain his humanity in its fulness and truth, and the marvel of his claims is great; for he makes the claims for himself that he may make them also for men."[22]

The traditional faith rests on two pillars. One is the messianic belief of Jewish seers, which is now generally conceded to have been illusory. His own circle of disciples thought that Jesus would turn out to be the Messiah "to rule over the House of Israel," but this expectation was never fulfilled. This delusion is perpetuated in the belief that he will yet return in person to rule, not merely over Israel, but over all nations. The second is the Logos doctrine of Greek thinkers, which developed into the dogma that the transcendent God and the immanent God are two distinct persons, one of whom only was incarnated in Jesus. This was a speculation, entirely incapable of proof, and one generally abandoned by modern philosophy. The crumbling of these two pillars is rendering a reconstruction of the faith about Christ necessary, and this Progressive Christianity is attempting.

This reconstruction of faith rests on two philosophical principles—the doctrine of the immanence of God and the doctrine of evolution.

The conception of God "as the soul of the world, an immanent spiritual power, a creative and perfecting agency, the source of our ideal values," is consistent with science and philosophy and with the meaning the word God carries in common language. It is consistent with the belief of Christ that "God is spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." All that we know of Him is revealed in Nature and in human life and history. The immanent God is the revealing God, bearing the burden of creation in

[22] Sir Henry Jones: Jesus or Christ, p. 88 ff.

His strength and the burden of humanity in His heart. The word-symbol by which we name Him is—Father. Of His transcendent life unrevealed in the universe and in humanity, we can know nothing; "for only so far as God is present in our experience can we know anything about Him at all. It is the immanence of the transcendent, the presence of the infinite in our finite lives, that alone explains the essential nature of man."[23]

From this it follows that the life of men is "rooted and grounded in God." They share in their man's due degree his intelligence and so they may also "become partakers of the divine nature." The Life of their lives is God and their bodies the temples of His holy spirit. The Christian faith declares that "whosoever abideth in love abideth in God and God abideth in him and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." This growing spiritual life, the fruits of which are kindness, goodness, patience, compassion and unselfish living, is possible because at the heart of all life is the Creative Love of the immanent God. The highest example of that life is furnished in the character of Christ.

In Christ we may then perceive human nature at its best through the cultivated consciousness of God as Indwelling Love. In this was revealed the spiritual possibilities latent in all human life, waiting to be developed. Thus Christ may be believed in as the perfect human example of a man normally born, abiding in God and God in him, and of the disciple of this faith it may be said, "the disciple when he is perfected shall be as his Master." "We are too apt," says Pringle-Pattison, "to limit and mechanize the great doctrine of the Incarnation. . . Whatever else it may mean, it means at least this,—that in the conditions of the highest human life we have access, as nowhere else, to the inmost of the divine."[24] Human life has a divine side and the divine life a human side, of which Christ may be taken as the

[23] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Spirit, p. 22.
[24] A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God, p. 157.

most outstanding expression, though not an isolated example. "The Gospel," says Dr. Henry, "is the revelation that God and man are eternally united. And it is in this organic union that God is known."[25]

The second formative principle used by Progressive Christianity in the reconstruction of the faith, is the doctrine of Evolution. There is a constant development going on of the higher out of the lower, of the more perfect out of the rudimentary, of the highly organized out of the simple, of the spiritual out of the material, of the immortal out of the mortal. This is the outward manifestation of the purposeful activities of the immanent Creator. The evolution of all things advanced stage by stage through the ages, until it reached its highest product in the self-conscious life of man, with his upward striving for greater freedom and perfection. Sir Henry Jones speaks of "the indwelling of infinite perfection in finite objects, the immanence of God in man's nature and His participation in his moral strivings. Man's blind and pathetic gropings after the best become, from his point of view, the working within him of the divine will. It is the movement to new perfection, each realization of the best being a starting point for a new departure. Instead of a Divine Being who dwells aloof from the world-process and can only look at it, seeing that it is already statically perfect, God reveals himself in that process. He is the process from stage to stage, that is from perfection to perfection."[26]

At the end of the long process of evolution, out of which the human race emerged in lowly estate, what is the nature of the goal still unattained? Is it not truly that men should become "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"? Is it not that they shall become heirs of the divine nature through a growing consciousness and knowledge of God who abides within them "to will and to do his good pleasure"? If we are asked who will

[25]Francis Henry: The Knowledge of Religious Truth, p. 69.
[26]Sir Henry Jones: The Faith that Inquires, p. 274.

reach the goal, may we not answer that all Christlike souls are on the way to the goal that is set before them in the example and experience of Christ? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be but we know that we shall be like him," said an apostle.

In the words of Le Conte, "As organic evolution reached its goal and completion in man, so human evolution reached its goal and completion in the ideal man—*i.e.* the Christ. We are all as men sons of God; the Christ the well-beloved Son . . . We are all partakers in various degrees of the divine nature; in him the divine nature is completely realized . . . In organic evolution species are transformed by environment; in human evolution character is transformed by its own ideal. Organic evolution is by necessary law; human evolution by voluntary effort. Organic evolution is pushed upward from behind and below; human evolution is drawn forward by the attractive force of ideals . . ."[27]

Placing Jesus Christ thus within the natural process as a true man, born as we are born, related to God only as we are, though farther advanced in spiritual attainments, we may say with Sir Oliver Lodge, "His humanity is to be recognized as real and ordinary and thorough and complete; not in middle life alone, but at birth and at death and after death. What happened to him may happen to any one of us, provided we attain the requisite altitude; an altitude, which, whether within our individual reach or not, is assuredly within the reach of humanity. 'Be born again.' 'Be ye perfect.' 'Ye are sons of God.' 'My Father and your Father, my God and your God.' The *un*uniqueness of the ordinary humanity of Christ is the first and patent truth, masked only by well-meaning and reverent superstition . . . The divinity of Jesus is the truth which now requires to be reperceived, to be illumined afresh with new knowledge, to be cleansed and revivified by

[27] Joseph Le Conte: Evolution and Religious Thought, p. 361.

the wholesome flood of scepticism which has poured over it. It can now be freed from all trace of grovelling superstition and can be recognized freely and enthusiastically; the Divinity of Christ and of all other noble and saintly souls, in so far as they too have been inflamed by a spark of Deity—in so far as they too can be recognized as manifestations of the divine."[28]

Such a conception of Christ honors him by interpreting his character as the product of his own voluntary choice as a man, the same as ours, and not as the necessary consequence of his essential Deity. It does not take him to be a supernatural Being fighting sham battles in a make-believe manhood. It makes him in the words of Theodore Parker, "A man living manlike, highly gifted, stepping thousands of years before the race of men, the profoundest religious genius God has raised up, whose words and works help us to form and develop the idea of the complete religious man . . . The divine incarnation is for all mankind; the aim it proposes is a complete union of man with God, till every action, wish and feeling is in complete harmony with the divine will. The personal Jesus is its encouragement and helps to reveal the possible of man."[29]

The doctrines of the immanence of God and of the evolution of man furnish, we repeat, the new starting point of Progressive Christianity in its reinterpretation of Christ and Christian experience. Rejecting the ancient dogma of the Logos-Messiah incarnated in Jesus only, to form a composite person, who is both God and man, it may say with Dr. Brown, "God is not thought of as separate from the universe, but rather as its immanent law. He is not a transcendent being living in a distant heaven, whence from time to time he intervenes in the affairs of earth. He is an ever-present spirit guiding all that happens to a wise and holy end. We meet him in nature. We meet him in history. We

[28]Sir Oliver Lodge: Man and the Universe, p. 274.
[29]Theodore Parker: A Discourse of Religion, p. 429.

meet him in the Bible. We meet him in the lives of great men, and supremely in Jesus, the ideal man, through whom he has given us the clearest revelation of his character and purpose . . . Jesus is not God and man, he is God in man, the firstborn among many brethren, but the type to which all mankind is ultimately to conform.[30]

Progressive Christianity has been profoundly influenced by the doctrine stated by Schleiermacher: "Essentially Christ is no more divine than we are. In a true sense all men are divine. But he knows his oneness with God; he is fully awake to his divinity; and his life is completely controlled by his realization of it. He is therefore divine in a sense which we are not yet, but eventually hope to become. We are all children of God, and awakened and inspired by Jesus we strive to live as such."[31] "If you will have it," said Martineau, "that Christ is only human, so much more divine must your humanity be."[32]

This interpretation of Christ and Christian experience permeates much that is called "modernist" in the teaching of the churches. In so far as it holds the unity of God and the faith of Christ that "the Father abiding in me (not the Eternal Son of whom I am the incarnation) doeth his works," such modernism is closer to the Unitarian testimony than to the dogmas of the creeds. Thus Lewis says, "We conceive God as the Holy Father seeking to realize in the world a family of holy sons. We ask, 'What is man?' and for answer point to Jesus Christ and we say, 'Man is for Divine Sonship . . . that Sonship of which Jesus Christ is at once the type, the promise and the potency.' And if we ask what manner of man was Jesus? the answer is, Jesus was a Jew of the first century, just as Paul was. Jesus was a true man. Being a man, the very plan of his life provided that he

[30] W. A. Brown: Art. in the Harvard Theological Review, Jan., 1911.
[31] A. C. McGiffert: Rise of Modern Theological Ideas, p. 208.
[32] James Martineau: Studies in Christianity, pp. 409, 412.

should desire and should realize the relation of sonship . . . Man is a son of God in his very plan and purpose and in the realization of that sonship he does to that extent realize himself. Jesus was the Son of God because he realized the Sonship on his own account. He began as we begin and he finished at the place where the whole meaning of life becomes as clear as a sunbeam . . . he achieved perfect sonship under human conditions . . . This is the claim we make for Jesus Christ. He was the Son of God by virtue of his moral achievement. The Divine that is partial in every man in complete in one man, who is therefore approved divine."[33]

This Modernist point of view, with its thinly veiled Unitarian tendencies, is open to the criticism passed by Stahlin on Ritschl's doctrine: "Deity, therefore is an attribute which does not in itself and originally belong to Christ; it is a crown of honor which a believing church has set upon his brow in gratitude for the work which he successfully achieved. Nay more, this predicate of deity must necessarily be regarded as an unjustifiable addition and hyperbole . . . The fact of the will of Christ being determined by the will of God does not at all imply that Christ was God or equal with God; what it involves is his dependence on God."[34]

Theological casuistry strains the power of language to hold on to the old phraseology of the creeds, while evacuating them of their real and intended meaning. Many Modernists will agree with Lewis that "Jesus was a Jew of the first century," and say that "no theory of his Person can be tolerated therefore which is in anywise incompatible with the frankest recognition of his true oneness with men." They may admit that his life was normally human from birth to death and that before he was born no such person existed for he became the Son of God by his moral achievement. They may add, "If Mary had been a different kind of mother Jesus would

[33] Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 102 ff.
[34] Leonhard Stahlin: Kant, Lotze and Ritschl, p. 220.

have been a different kind of man," and that "our Lord's experience was controlled by the same laws that control our own." Then after all these concessions are made, the claim is entered that such beliefs about Christ are entirely compatible with the meaning of the ancient creeds, and say, "We reaffirm the Christian faith that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God."[35] The Modernist, who seeks both to hold on and to let go, finds that Jesus Christ came into existence at Bethlehem, grew into manhood in the same way as other men, but "thought as God thought, acted as God acted, suffered as God suffered," and so became the Eternal Son, not because he had existed from all eternity as the Second Person of the Trinity, as the creeds affirm, but because there never was a time nor will be a time when God was or will be other than he reveals himself to be in the life of the man, Christ Jesus. "In him we meet that which is contemporary of every age and of every man."[35]

To men who are not pledged to the defense of traditional theological phrases, it would seem better to frankly drop them and be done with them, rather than try to make them mean what they were never intended to mean. The doctrine of the Immanent God who reveals His mind and will in time and space through all things, all laws, all goodness, all truth, all beauty, and enters into the consciousness of men as the spirit of Holy Love, redeeming their lives from selfishness and sin, enables us to say that God was in Christ, as the Father to whom he prayed and on whom he depended. But in the same sense we must speak of God in the universe and in other human lives. "Know ye not that the spirit of God dwelleth in you," said Paul. "If we love one another God abideth in us," wrote John. In that sense only may we say of Jesus that God was in him and that he was such a man as each of us ought to and may become.

[35] Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, pp. 342 ff., 307 ff.

Either our lives are rooted and grounded in material elements, in atoms and electric energy, without mind or love, or they are rooted and grounded in an Eternal Mind and Love, that we call God. If we can hold the Christian faith, we shall conclude that where love is God is, imparting His character to His creatures. In the sacrificial love of Christ and of all Christlike souls we may then see God manifesting Himself in the flesh. But such a faith is as far as possible from the faith of the creeds, with their dogmas about the unique incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity—the Eternal Son of God—in Jesus only which makes him an isolated phenomenon is history, one who was both God and man.

To affirm that God was in Christ or that the man Jesus was a reduced facsimile of the God he worshiped, or that God is like Christ, is not the traditional faith of the Church. For that faith unequivocally asserts that God is a Trinity of Persons, one of whom, the Eternal Son, incarnated himself in Jesus only, in a manner never to be repeated or imitated. To play fast and loose with this faith by first verbally accepting it and then explaining it away and trying to make out that it means something quite different, seems very much like trifling with a sacred subject. Those who do believe that Christ was God, the Incarnate Son, ought to hold their faith as long as it seems tenable; but those who have come to believe that he was a man like other men, though living godlike and in complete harmony with the will of the Father, the type of character which it is the divine purpose to develop out of the materials of humanity, let them not camouflage their change of base in the phraseology of ancient speculations.

Faith in the moral perfections of Christ leads men to believe them to be the projection of the character of God into human expression. Therefore they can think of God as Christlike. Such a conclusion, however, in no way implies that an ideal man is identical with God.

Likeness is not identity. To be like God would indeed imply a personal distinction between the man and God. Yet many Modernists, who do not care to deny bluntly that Jesus Christ is God, evade the issue or mask it by saying that Christians worship a God who is like Christ.

"The sum of it all is," says Sherwood Eddy, "that God is always and everywhere like Jesus."[36] "The distinctive feature of the Christian conception of God," writes Dr. Brown, "is the conviction that the character and purpose of God are Christlike."[37] "The Pagan," says Bishop McConnell, "has gods enough, or the Pagan today has God enough. Christianity has to do with a moral God, a God *like* Christ. The one mark which sets the Christian God apart from Pagan gods is just the Christlikeness of God."[38] "In looking to him (Christ)," says Dean Mathews, "we find ourselves praying to a God whom we conceive to be like him."[39] Such language assumes, on the face of it, that Christ was not himself God, but a man of whom it could be said that God was in certain respects like him. It is not the language of "the orthodox creed—that for us men and for our salvation very God, the Son of God, consented to come down from the bosom of the Father to become man and for us to die . . ."[40]

Such language, however, has from the start been quite familiar in the Unitarian branch of the Church, and there it has not been obscured by any attempt to represent it as in harmony with the traditional dogmas. "Thus every good man," said Clarke, "is a revelation of God to us and helps us to love Him better than before. The goodness of Jesus is a revelation, and the greatest revelation ever made to men of the goodness of God. That is the true view of his Divinity, that we look

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[36]Sherwood Eddy: Facing the Crisis, pp. 36, 63.
[37]W. A. Brown: Christian Theology, p. 87.
[38]F. J. McConnell: Art. in the Christian Century, Nov. 22, 1923.
[39]Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, p. 143.
[40]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, p. 215.

through him and see God."[41] The Christlikeness of God was a favorite theme of Martineau, whom S. Parkes Cadman calls "one of the noblest religious philosophers of any age." "Jesus of Nazareth," he says, "God hath presented to us simply in his inspired humanity; him we accept, not indeed as very God, but as the true image of God, commissioned to show what no written doctrinal record could declare, the entire moral perfections of Deity. . . The universe gives us the scale of God and Christ His spirit."[42] Also, "And accordingly, ever since he visited our earth with blessing, the soul of Christendom has worshiped a God resembling him—and therefore not the God of which philosophy dreams—a mere physical Force, without spirituality, without love, chiefly employed in whirling the fly-wheel of nature."[43] "In the mind of Christ," writes J. Estlin Carpenter, "he presented within the limits of our moral nature a complete expression of his own. . .and Jesus stood forth as the moral image of the Everlasting Mind."[44] It was this faith that led Channing to remark, "To grow in the likeness of God we need not cease to be men."

The Modernism, which strips Jesus Christ of all the attributes of God, which finds him to have been a Jew of the first century and entirely human in all his experience, which regards him not as the Incarnate God the Son but as a perfect son of Man, which worships a Christlike God but not a Christ who is God, the eternal equal of the Father, which sees no distinction of persons in the God who is transcendent, the God who is immanent and the God who abides in the hearts of those who love, in the opinion of the writer, can scarcely be said to represent the traditional faith of the Church, however much such Modernism may protest when the charge is brought against it that it leans very strongly toward the Unitarian heresy.

[41]James Freeman Clarke: Common Sense in Religion, p. 417.
[42]James Martineau: Studies in Christianity, p. xx.
[43]Op. cit., p. 194.
[44]J. Estlin Carpenter: James Martineau, pp. 365, 366.

As the practice declines of defaming human nature as totally depraved, alienated from the life of God by its very constitution, and deserving only eternal perdition, and a clearer insight into the latent possibilities of human life and its essential kinship with God takes its place, the inclination will also lessen to regard even Jesus as a superhuman person. "The progress of religious thought," writes Dr. Dodson, "consists partly in the discovery that the highest experiences of the spiritual geniuses of the race were not unique. They are merely the greatest instances of a general law. What is true of them is in some measure true of us, and our religious life ought to be an experimental verification of the principles of which they have been the chief historic illustrations. . . . The great idea is, the more humanity, the more God, and the more divinity, the more truly human." So of great Christian men and women he can say, "The biography of those lives might each bear the sub-title, A Revelation of God in one of His American children."[45]

We find statements strikingly similar in the utterances of that illustrious Modernist preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick. He says, "It is evident the Master's mental life went through the development of a normal human youth"; Jesus "is not an isolated phenomenon"; for "the God who was in Jesus is the same God who is in us." He is "the living God who seeks to be incarnate is everyone of us." "In our thinking, no longer are God and man like oil and water that cannot mix; rather all the best in us is God in us." This he illustrates. "When Livingstone goes down to Africa, how can we explain it? Will you say, God sent him? That is true but you must go farther than that. Will you say that God went with him? That is true but you must go deeper than that. Will you say God went in him? Aye, that is the Christian affirmation. God went in him."[46] Such a doctrine makes the immanence of God the secret of all spiritual

[45]George R. Dodson: The Sympathy of Religions, p. 92.
[46]Harry E. Fosdick: Art. in Christian Work, Apr. 7, 1923.

effort, the same in Jesus as in Livingstone. The "normal human youth" in each case becomes a son of God "by virtue of his moral achievement," as Lewis remarks, and to that extent reveals God in the life of one of His human children. Through Christ his disciples were led to trust in the Christlike God and through Livingstone the Africans gained the same experience. The living God was in the same sense incarnate in both, the only difference being in the personality of the men.

Such was the faith of Martineau: "And if Jesus of Nazareth, in virtue of the characteristics of his spirit, holds the place of Prince of Saints, and perfects the conditions of the pure religious life, he thereby reveals the possibilities of the human soul and their dependence on habitual communion between man and God."[47]

It was out of a similar faith that Dean Fenn could say: "Neither the world nor the individual man can fall so low as to get beyond the reach of God's purpose and the help of God's power. . . Notwithstanding our many failures and sins, God's power works within us to purify our hearts, enlighten our minds, reinforce our wills, until we shall stand forth the soldiers of ultimate victory. Evil may win battle after battle, but God wins the campaign. Think not so much of your evil as of God, and in those moments of quiet thoughtfulness a new power of light and love streams into the soul."[48]

Such also is the faith of Peabody, who says, "The Unitarians are mystics . . . The representative expressions of their habit of mind are to be sought in their witness to the present life of God in the soul of man."[49] Having such a faith, Bowen, of Meadville Theological School, could say, "Jesus is our Leader, because he walked in the same path we must tread; our Master, because we cannot choose but to follow him; our Example, because we have similar divine possibilities; our

[47]James Martineau: The Seat of Authority in Religion, p. 719.
[48]W. W. Fenn: Proceedings of the General Conference of Unitarian Churches, 1921, p. 49.
[49]F. G. Peabody: Sermon on The Church of the Spirit, p. 12.

Brother, because we have the same Father . . . We take his hand because he is one of us. We cry out when the theologians take him from us to make him a God, not because we are troubled by a mistaken doctrine, but because they have taken away our Master and we know not where they have laid him."[50]

That which all men need most is not the metaphysical truth regarding the nature of Christ, but a deeper consciousness of God in their own lives, as the power that makes for righteousness and for Christlike words and deeds. The truth that makes men free is not to be found in creed and dogma, ancient or modern, but in the knowledge of God as Indwelling Love, the spirit which makes a human life divine. The intellect may flounder blindly among the unfathomable mysteries of existence, but he who, like Christ, aspires after the ideally good, denying himself to bless and save others, will find the Light of Life.

"And if the vision come to thee
Revealed by inward sign,
Earth will be full of Deity
And with His glory shine.
Thou shalt not want for company
Nor pitch thy tent alone;
The Indwelling God will go with thee
And show thee of His own."[51]

[50]Clayton R. Bowen: Why are Unitarians Disciples of Christ?, p. 20.
[51]F. L. Hosmer: Unitarian Hymn Book, No. 75.

CHAPTER XV

GOD THE FATHER AND GOD THE TRINITY

"The Lord our God is one Lord . . . . My Father and your Father, my God and your God."

JESUS CHRIST.

Clever intellectuals profess to be able to explain all that happens in the universe without the hypothesis of the existence of God. In an eternal fog they account for light without the solar fires. Matter and Force they know, but God they do not know. Without now discussing the reasons why, we will simply accept the theistic position and say with Lotze, "Perfect Personality is in God only, to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof."[1] We will agree with Schurman: "For my own part I think it has been shown that the phenomena of both the universe and of human life require the thinking mind to postulate a Supreme Ground of all things, which we are entitled to describe as self-conscious Spirit and loving Father."[2] This veiled Being we may know in part even if complete comprehension is beyond our powers. From the standpoint of philosophy it must be admitted that, "The power manifested to us through all existence, an "Infinite and Eternal Energy manifested alike within us and without us," to which "we ascribe not only the manifestations but the law of their order," [these are Spencer's own words] can hardly be fitly described by that barren abstraction, the Unknowable."[3]

Granting that the order and unity of the universe,

[1]Hermann Lotze: Microcosmus, II, p. 688.
[2]J. G. Schurman: Belief in God, p. 266.
[3]A. Seth Pringle-Pattison: The Idea of God, p. 214.

and the faculties of man, offer good reasons for believing in the existence of this God, the Father, have we any sufficient ground for thinking that we can know Him well enough to say with the Mother Church of the orthodox faith that, "In this one God there are to be found Three Eternal Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are perfectly equal to each other"?[4] What ground is there for that particular belief? And how did it arise?

The study of the Bible makes it clear that the faith of the Jews began as a primitive polytheism and ended in an ethical monotheism, expressed in the words of Jesus, "The Lord our God is one Lord, our Father in heaven." The subsequent dogma of the Trinity is entirely absent. From the commencement of the second century, however, Christians began the use of a triology to express their faith in a threefold manifestation of God's activity. The Father was Creator, the Son the founder of the Kingdom of God on earth and head of the Church, the Holy Spirit the energy of God working in men for their salvation. It was through the power of the Spirit of the Father that Jesus was able to do his works and the same Spirit that was in Jesus worked in other men to make them like him. In the mystic unity of humanity with God, the same divine Spirit was in all, in Jesus the supreme Son but ready also, to enable others to be like him, the "Sons of God." Only gradually and against vigorous opposition at first was the doctrine advanced that these terms, Father, Son and Spirit, implied that there were three distinct and Eternal Persons united in the substance of the Godhead. The doctrine gained in popularity after the deification of Jesus Christ, already spoken of, and the revision of the original faith to admit him to an equality with the Father. The next step was to elevate the Spirit to the same dignity of on Eternal and distinct Person, and the dogma of the Trinity was complete.

[4]Cardinal James Gibbons: The Faith of the Fathers, p. 19.

Perhaps the best starting point for a brief study of this subject as developed in the Bible is to learn what is meant by the Holy Spirit.

In the narrow nationalism of the Old Testament history, God is conceived to be the Sovereign-Jehovah, who had chosen Israel to be his peculiar people. He dwells apart from men in heaven; he comes and goes as his business demands. He may control the machinery of the world, but it is from a distance. The priests declare his separateness by their doctrine of his holiness. Men may approach him only through the official and sacred mediators. "The God of the Levitical cultus," says Glover, "is a far-off God, aloof from sinful men, jealous in guarding his holiness; into his holy place only the priests may go, and they with precautions; and men become growingly anxious to avoid using his name."[5]

The gulf fixed by this priestly religion between men and God, the prophets sought to bridge. This they did by claiming that God is a Ruler with the heart of a Father and that He is near to all who call upon Him. God was a Holy Spirit active in the world. Isaiah speaks of a great leader who shall spring up "and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." Ezekiel represents Jehovah as saying, "I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." To Zechariah he says, "I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace." To Joel he declares, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." One of the psalmists prays, "Take not thy holy spirit from me." Of his great servant Jehovah said, "I have put my spirit upon him," and the prophet in telling of his mission declares, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me," words which Jesus also applies to himself. The spirit thus is the outpouring of a divine power open to men to receive and by the time of Christ it had come to mean the particular kind of power capable of producing

[5]T. R. Glover: Progress in Religion to the Christian Era, p. 257.

moral improvement and spiritual life. An evil man was supposed to be obsessed by an evil spirit, a good man to be possessed by the spirit of God. Human nature was regarded as the battle ground between the evil spirits and the divine spirit, and the divine spirit was God in action, permeating human life with an influence that conquered evil and implanted the seeds of every virtue. The spirit was the spirit of holiness and love.

Of John it was said, ". . . he shall be filled with the holy spirit from his mother's womb." Jesus was prepared for his work by "the spirit of God descending upon him." He said, "If I by the spirit of God cast out devils then is the kingdom of God come upon you." He did not enter into the metaphysics or psychology of the subject but dealt with its practical and ethical aspects. He warned men not to resist the spirit of God, for it was the very power of God at work in human life seeking to impart eternal life and peace to men. To quench this spirit by stubbornly clinging to sin was to cut oneself off from the very source of spiritual well-being. He believed that the same spirit which enabled him to do the will of God would be freely given to others also—"How much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask." The apostolic revival of faith and joy after the resurrection is attributed to the outpouring of the spirit. As God had given the spirit to Christ and the prophets so also was He giving it to those who were willing to become followers of Christ. "Know ye not," says Paul, "that the spirit of God dwelleth in you." The Christian virtues are the fruits of the spirit. The analogy is suggestive; fruits are the product of the tree but are only made possible by the tree absorbing the light of heaven. So men must assimilate the vitalizing influences of the divine spirit to bring forth much fruit. Personality is not to be suppressed but to be developed by this appropriation of divine energy. The rudimentary good in human nature is to be perfected by welcoming the

nurturing aid of the spirit. "It is God who worketh in you," writes Paul, as he enjoins men to "work out their salvation." In other words, God is in action in the world of men; the same Spirit whose energy fills the universe and that raised Jesus from the dead, is the Holy Spirit that raises men from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. The Father is not far distant from men; as Holy Spirit he abides with men to generate sons in his own image, whereof the supreme evidence is that they love one another.

Gathering up this testimony, the faith of the early disciples would appear to be that God is the Creative Spirit of Eternal Love, who can and does impart to men the power to become His sons by filling them with an effluence from His own divine life. The Holy Spirit, then, is God in action within humanity, as the inspirer of love and holiness in their life. The Father is not a Deity sitting apart in the heavens, but the Living God making His permanent abode in the world formed by Him and in the hearts of all who love as He loves. His full and complete surrender to the power of this Divine Spirit at work in the world made Jesus an example of the kind of men God is seeking to produce, and as Paul says, "as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God." He prayed for them also that they like Christ might be "filled with all the fullness of God."

Such a faith assuredly makes a close approach to the doctrine of the Divine Immanence. The Jehovah of Israel, handing down His laws from heaven, men are exchanging for an Eternal Father manifesting His presence in the world as the spirit of life and love. Such a faith is not trinitarian in any true sense, because it does not imply the activities of three equal partners in Deity. There is one God, the Father, who is over all, and through all and in all. Having such a faith one may say with Walker. "If there is One Sole Power in the universe,

whether in immanent or transcendent form. . . .if the One Power for our sakes has conditioned Himself so as to give rise to the material world to be the scene and school of our life; . . .if that Divine Power has wrought steadily onward as a perfecting Reason till man has been evolved. . . .if His nature is such that we can share in the Reason and Love that belong to the Divine Being. . . .if the Eternal Spirit has so visited man as to carry the religious life to such a height that he can find rest and fulness of life only in union with God; . . .if we are able to recognize, and in our character express the Divine character. . . .then surely, we can get no better name to express the source of our being than that so constantly on the lips of Christ,—our Heavenly Father."[6]

The course of theological speculation, however, led the churches away from this faith and landed them in a system of beliefs, which declared such a faith insufficient and heretical. They who simply worshiped God as the Father, whose spirit of love and holiness poured forth to abide in men, abiding in men who would receive it as it had in Christ, were denounced as the worst of sinners. The elaboration of the new dogmas was responsible for the acrimonious controversies which have disturbed the churches and for some of the most shameful episodes that have disgraced Christian history.

Faith in God the Father, manifesting Himself as the generating source of Life and Love, the permanent guest in some spiritual sense of Christ and of all Christlike spirits, and faith in Christ as the Well-beloved Son, into whose likeness all other sons would be transformed by the spirit of God tirelessly at work in the hearts of men, would seem to meet all the requirements necessary to make one a disciple of Christ in the early Church. Christ himself never seems to have insisted on more than this faith that would lead one to abide in the will and love of God. The writer who most highly exalted

[6] W. L. Walker: Christian Theism and Spiritual Monism, p. 307 ff.

his personality interprets his teaching in the words, "Father, this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Paul was always faithful to this doctrine. However highly he exalted Jesus, as the Man from Heaven and as the viceroy of God to reign over the Church, he always spoke of "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Yet to us," he said, "there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus the Christ." As Beyschlag puts it, "To him the Father is not the first of three divine persons, so that the concept "God" includes in the same degree the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but he regards the Father as the only God . . . Then the apostle manifestly supposes in God the possibility of a threefold mode of being—over the world, in Christ and in the hearts of believers. And that certainly furnished the starting-point for the subsequent speculations of the Church." The presence of the divine spirit, as a mode of God's activity, in Christ no more makes him God than the same presence in others makes them gods. And thus, "the threefold relation which the apostle makes God the Father hold to believers amounts rather to the distinction of a transcendence of God over the world and an immanence of God in the world, the latter of which again is conceived as twofold, a general presence in the world and a special presence in the hearts of men."[7]

They who hold this faith of Christian theism may then say with John, "No man hath seen God at any time . . . hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit." But if Christ himself was God, it is difficult to discern how it could be true that no man had seen God at any time. Declaring both statements true that no man had seen God at any time and that they who had seen Christ had seen God, the theologians went on to affirm that

[7]W. Beyschlag: New Testament Theology, II, pp. 89, 90.

there is not only God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, but God the Father and that the only one of these three was incarnated in Jesus, so that they who saw him had not seen God the Father but had seen God the Son.

As creeds became longer, intolerance of disbelief in them became stronger. As dogmas became more abstruse and incredible, the more violent was the pressure to compel assent, the less reason, the more anathema. For centuries the creed chanted in the churches concerning the Trinity declared, "Which faith except everyone keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." The effect of such intimidation has been to create a tradition that it is dangerous to doubt the dogmas of the creeds and to think even as Christ thought about God. Since this faith has been so woven into the very texture of Christian thought as to seem essential to salvation, equal emphasis should now be placed upon the faith of Christ and upon the truth that men may repudiate the subsequent speculations of the Church completely and unreservedly, and still remain the best of Christians. If it be not essential to Christian character and spiritual life, why make any pretence of believing a dogma after it is felt to be an affront to reason?

Religious experience and the labor spent upon its interpretation led the early Christians to this general conclusion. The Eternal God ceased to be for them an inaccessible Sovereign reigning in heaven and communicating with men through angels and priests. He was conceived to be the Father of men, who was seeking to persuade them to receive his spirit in their hearts and to be his sons in disposition by becoming, like Him, living centers of radiant love, joy, and holiness. To enter into this higher life was to be "born of the spirit." The "twice-born" were the family of God and heirs of eternal life, and into this experience Jesus led the way for all men by his example. Him Christ addressed, "I

thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," and taught his disciples to pray to him as "Our Father," To Paul God became "The God and Father of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah." The theologians of the Gentile churches changed this conception radically, and Christians were enjoined by them to believe not only in one God, the Father Almighty, but also that "the Son, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, so that the Godhead and the manhood were joined together in one Person, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." This Christ was said to be "Perfect God and Perfect Man, equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood."

As Percy Gardner says, "It is noteworthy that the doctrine of the Trinity, as formulated by Athanasius, was a direct piling together of contradictions."[8] After these dogmas had been developed by the speculative reasoning of one set of men, they were offered to all other men as a "mystery," to be accepted by faith, a mystery transcending reason.

The road that led to this conclusion is one open still for anyone to take. A glance over its course may enable us to see why it was followed and to decide whether we should follow it.

God in religious philosophy and experience was thought of, as we have seen, under three aspects or three modes of existence. He was (1) the Transcendent One, who is before and above all things; (2) the Immanent One, who is the creative organizer of all things, the Life and Soul of the universe; (3) the Holy One, who enters into spiritual relations with men to unite them with Himself and make them like Himself, morally pure and holy. This has sometimes been called the Trinity of Reason and Experience. Many imagine themselves to

[8]Percy Gardner: Exploratio Evangelica, p. 395.

be good Trinitarians in believing in God after this fashion. But such is not the Trinity of Catholic and Protestant dogma. The creeds confer distinct personality on each of these three aspects of the Divine Being. as they are thus presented to the mind. The Father is identified with the Transcendent One; the Son with the Immanent One; and the Holy Ghost with the Holy One. The Divine Three are of one "substance," but each is capable of acting separately without his action becoming also a form or mode of activity of either of the others. They are "coequal and coeternal" together. One of the three separated himself from the others to become incarnate in Jesus by a miraculous birth; neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost, but the Eternal Son only became man for a season and thus could be spoken of as both God and man.

The fatal defect of this theological enigma is succinctly stated by an eminent authority: "With the transition from the Trinity of Experience to the Trinity of Dogma, the theological statement tends to lose touch with the gracious figure of the historical Christ."[9] The reason is obvious. The historical Christ of the early Christian documents was a man among men; the theological Christ is both "Perfect God and Perfect Man," and naturally the greater absorbed the lesser and the manhood was lost in the godhood.

This transition was rendered easy by the popular deification of Christ in the Gentile churches. They did not come to believe in the Deity of Christ because they had received a revelation of the truth of the Trinity; they learned to formulate a dogma regarding the Trinity after they had first come to believe in the Deity of Christ. In the words of McGiffert, "The ancient Greco-Roman world was used to all kinds of deities and was not always averse to deifying human beings, provided they were persons of uncommon dignity

[9]Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Art. on Trinity.

and worth, who deserved well of their fellows or were of sufficient importance to be widely revered. Inevitably Gentile Christians would take it for granted that Jesus Christ, whom they recognized as saviour and revered as such, was a divine being, whether they were told so or not. The God of the primitive Gentile Christians, or at any rate of many of them, was Jesus Christ. . . They began with him and only afterward associated him with the God of the Jews, and worshiped two divine beings, Son and Father."[10]

The Gentile Christians were the more readily able to place Christ beside the Father as an object of worship, on account of his previous exaltation by Paul to the rank and standing of the Heavenly Messiah and Mediator, and of the teaching that in him the divine Logos of the Greeks had found a human plenipotentiary. By a natural transition the Christ, the moment he was deified, was identified with the God immanent in the world, and the Father with the God transcendent above the world. Next the Holy Spirit immanent in the hearts of men was elevated to the rank of another divine personality, distinct from the other two. This, of course, amounted to a division of the one God of true monotheism, first into two persons and finally into three. To support this theology recourse was had to all the reasons, already noted, which may be offered to confirm faith in the Trinity of Reason and Experience. To the mind troubled by the problem of how these three modes of the Divine Life can be three Divine Persons, was offered the argument that God must be transcendent, and must be immanent, and must be holy spirit. These three aspects of the divine life, it was said are in reality not real Persons but mere modes of existence of the One. The mind was thus left oscillating between a belief in three personalities with such a character that they would be in reality three gods, and a belief in one God manifested

[10] A. C. McGiffert: The God of the Early Christians, pp. 42, 89.

in three modes of existence. Both of these extremes were condemned as heretical, one being Tritheism and the other Sabellianism.

Though each of the Three is represented as acting like an individual person, we are assured that this is not the case. Brown warns us, saying, "It is important that 'person' in the Trinitarian sense does not mean personality. It denotes the several parts which may be played by a single actor."[11] Then why should the One Divine Actor limit himself to three parts? If the Trinity mean nothing more than a single Personality assuming different parts then why call Him different names, Father as he plays one part and Son as he plays another, and then affirm that God the Father was not incarnate in Christ but only God the Son?

This refuge for the perplexed is sponsored also by Bishop Gore: "Though the Three are spoken of as personally distinct, each by his presence and actions involves the presence and actions of all. . .the term "person" is not used of God in exactly the same sense as it is used of human experience."[12]

This only multiplies the confusion. We are told (1) that a man is a person; (2) that God is a person but not in just the same sense as man is; (3) that in God are three Persons but no one of them is a person in the same sense as man is a person or as the One God is a Person. Small wonder that the plain man gives up trying to follow these twists and turns and concludes that the whole defense of the dogma is a hopeless muddle.

What we have called the Trinity of Reason and Experience is a philosophical interpretation of the universe and life in theistic terms. It means that God is our Father, the Creative Spirit and Lover of man, who is greater than all things and before all, and at the same time immanent in all as their manifested Life, from whom also radiates the Holy Spirit, imparting his love

[11]W. A. Brown: Christian Theology, p. 148.
[12]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, pp. 239, 244.

and character to men. It means in the words of Paul, "There is one God, the Father, who is over all and through all and in all." In Christ and in all Christlike lives, we behold the manifested grace and goodness which God is imparting to men who will to do his will. He never ceases to be One and the same God and there is no need of confusing thought by using different personal names for his threefold mode of life. All persons whom he creates by his power, from lowest to highest, are creatures partaking in various degrees of his qualities, but not one of them, even the highest, can claim equality with Him, who is the source of all. Such a faith is entirely consistent with true monotheism, but it does not fulfill the requirements of the ancient creeds which demand such a distinction of persons in Deity that one of them may be the Son incarnated in Jesus, while the others are not. On this account, as Dr. Paine observes, "It is one of the singular facts of the present theological situation that the theologians who are the staunchest supporters of the trinitarian faith once delivered, as they believe, are themselves drifting directly to a unitarian heresy, which the early church condemned and cast out."[13]

The importance attached to right belief on this subject by the churches is our only adequate excuse for the attempt here made to understand what it requires of men. Otherwise it would seem like a waste of words in futile speculation. Should any one inquire why the Trinity of Reason and Experience, or the threefold aspect of God, or the threefold manifestation of His life as over all, and through all and in all who love and do his will, does not fulfill the requirements of the Trinitarian faith, the reason is obvious. For while that Trinitarian faith denies that each of the Three is an individual Person, in the common sense of the term, the traditional scheme of redemption requires each of them

[13] L. L. Paine: Evolution of Trinitarianism, p. 147.

to act as an individual Person, distinct from the others. This can best be made plain by quotations from distinguished teachers who seek to justify the traditional phraseology.

"Each of the Three Persons," says Dr. Snowden, "is represented as distinct from the others, and yet together they constitute one Godhead. They speak and act like persons in all their relations to one another and to the world. Of course the doctrine must be kept clear of tritheism."[14] But how? Illingworth speaks of them as as "that Divine Society whose coequal members are one in infinite and eternal love."[15] "Is it not a delight," writes Bishop Gore, "to believe that the ultimate reality is not a monotonous unity, but a unity which contains in itself a fellowship of persons."[16] Beet compares them to the three partners of a firm, coöperating at the head of three different departments of a common business.[17] Thus we are required to think of the Three as a society of persons, who act like separate individuals, and yet are forbidden to believe that they are three individuals.

The difficulties increase as we proceed with our inquiry. "The teaching of the Catholic Church," says Father Conway, "is that there is one divine nature, and in that divine nature there are three persons. As therefore the words one and three refer to two essentially distinct things, nature and person, there can be no question of any absurd or contradictory statement of doctrine."[18] These three are so distinct that only one of them was incarnated in Christ, making him both God and man. "Only one of the Divine Persons," says Spirago, "the Son of God, assumed our human nature."[19] "Each of the persons in whom the Godhead subsists," writes Gore, "is a distinct person from the others. . . The Divine

[14] J. H. Snowden: The Personality of God, pp. 36, 65.
[15] J. R. Illingworth: Divine Immanence, p. 88.
[16] Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, p. 252.
[17] J. A. Beet: Through Christ to God, p. 263.
[18] Father Conway: Question Box, p. 26.
[19] Francis Spirago: The Catechism Explained, pp. 129, 193.

Son in becoming man must, we conclude, have accepted voluntarily and deliberately the limitations involved in really living as a man."[20] "The Son," says Dr. Weston, "willed so to relate Himself to the Father and to men that within these relationships He could know Himself as the unlimited Son of God."[21] "He knew," says Sanday, "that the condition He was assuming permitted only degrees of self-manifestation. . . The Deity which rules the universe is in the last resort the same Deity which took human flesh."[22] Forsythe speaks of "the eternal, holy and obedient relations of the Son to the Father and in the act of renunciation outside the walls of the world. . . . We have the Son acting from love as truly and creatively as the Father."[23] Canon Liddon tells of the "personal distinction which exists between the divine Son and the Eternal Father," and says that "He is both personally distinct from and yet literally equal to Him," and that this Person distinct from the Father "creates the form in which He manifests Himself."[24]

"This pre-existent Son," says Denney, "did not think of of His own things but of the things of others, and for us men He gave up heaven for an earthly life."[25] "Now the doctrine that God is a Trinity of Persons," says Harris, "teaches that God is a perfect Society of Persons, not a solitary unit. . . The Three loving Persons are coeternal."[26] "We speak of the incarnation of God," writes Fairbairn, "but it would be more correct to speak of the incarnation of the Word or Son. . . Jesus Christ is neither God nor the Godhead incarnate but the incarnate Son of God."[27] Pope and others have identified the preëxistent Son with the angel-Jehovah of Jewish history. "The Incarnate is Jehovah. He is the angel of

[20]Charles Gore: Belief in Christ, pp. 225, 247.
[21]F. Weston: The One Christ, pp. 156–159.
[22]W. Sanday: Christologies, pp. 178, 168.
[23]P. T. Forsythe: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 273, 286, 300, 306.
[24]Canon Liddon: The Divinity of our Lord, pp. 236, 326, 316.
[25]James Denney: Studies in Theology, pp. 54–58.
[26]Charles Harris: Creeds or No Creeds, p. 348.
[27]A. M. Fairbairn: The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 475.

Jehovah who appeared to Abraham. He is Jehovah, who as incarnate comes to His literal temple."[28] "The Son must empty Himself," says Mackintosh, "that from within mankind He may declare the Father's will."[29]

All this may be true or not true, but certainly it is the language of Tritheism and not of Monotheism. The creedal dogmas require such language of their expositors which conveys a belief in three Persons who are equally Gods. In order to escape this dilemma and preserve the faith that God is One Person, it is said that the Three Persons are not three individuals but each is in reality a "hypostasis." By turning the language into Greek, it is hoped to silence further questions. But a "hypostasis" which under the name of "Eternal Son," can know, will, love, act, consent, obey, renounce, empty himself, create, rule, and form one of a society of three equals, is so much like a real person, that to call him by an ambiguous Greek term seems only to serve as a theological camouflage to hide an inherent contradiction. Sanday acknowledges this difficulty in saying, "But if one who can think for himself as Son of God did pass through a human career in time and space, then we must naturally (according to all human standards) think of Him as a Person. That is, we must to some extent project our ideas of Personality into the internal economy of the Godhead. We do so with all reverence and caution, so far as we are compelled, but not an inch farther."[30] Which amounts to an admission that the Son was a Person "to some extent," and that seems scarcely adequate as a description of one who is thought to be "Perfect God" as well as "perfect man."

Against this confusion of thought and language in support of a speculative dogma, necessitated by the deification of Jesus, Unitarians were among the first to raise a protest. They believed that such ideas were

[28] W. B. Pope: Compendium of Christian Theology, II, pp. 108, 123.
[29] H. R. Mackintosh: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, pp. 294, 31.
[30] W. A. Sanday: Christologies, p. 45.

required by neither Scripture nor philosophy. This, however, did not prevent their believing in God, the Father, as transcendent, as immanent in the universe and as specially imparting his own spiritual life to man through the abiding presence and grace of his spirit. "It accepts the view," says Armstrong, "that God was truly incarnate in Jesus Christ, but it goes on to say that in like manner he is incarnate in all good men, that there is a divine spark in all of us, which is truly no other than the divine dwelling in the human. It is simply a mode of stating the close touch between God and the human soul; a recognition that there is an element in the human spirit which responds to the touch of the Spirit of God."[31]

Many Modernists appear to assume that this conception of God as the Immanent Spirit of Love, manifesting His character and life in men and supremely in the human life of Jesus, can be squared with the Incarnation dogma of the Trinitarian creeds. Lewis says, "In the Son of his love God saw also himself. He saw there what he himself would choose to be and to do in the same circumstances . . . The divine that is partial in every man is complete in One Man, who is therefore himself approved divine, and whose achievement thereupon takes on a universal character. Deity is there and humanity is there, and who shall say which is which?"[32] The same question sprang to the lips of Emerson, who frankly rejected the traditional dogma of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son,

> "Draw if thou canst, the mystic line
> Severing rightly his from thine,
> Which is human, which divine."

"Let God be conceived as the Eternal Spirit of Sacrificial Love from which all things proceed," says Lewis, "and let Jesus be conceived as One who absolutely manifested that Spirit under the conditions of a human life, and

[31] R. A. Armstrong: The Trinity and the Incarnation, p. 163.
[32] Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, pp. 330, 114.

all the practical and religious and philosophical value of the idea and fact of incarnation may be retained without entailing the burden of an outworn and impossible metaphysic."[32]

Harris points out this distinction between the doctrine of the Divine Immanence and the traditional dogma of the Incarnation of God the Son very correctly, in saying that many Modernists "start with the principle, which no orthodox Christian can object to, that God is immanent in [that it dwells in without being identical with] the entire universe. Then they proceed to prove that God is especially immanent in rational creation, *i.e.* in man; then that He is particularly immanent in good men; and finally that He is supremely immanent in the best of men, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Then changing the meaning of immanence, without warning, from indwelling to identity, they conclude by maintaining that the general result of their argument is to prove that Jesus Christ is actually God, and that it is lawful to worship him.[33] "It must be obvious," he continues, "to every logical mind, that the idea of God dwelling in man (which is meant by immanence), and God becoming man (which is meant by Incarnation) are radically distinct and contradictory. Indwelling, however ideally perfect, can never yield any other idea than that of a man in whom God dwells, a God-possessed, God-inspired, God-sanctified man. Never by any possibility can it yield the idea of a man who is actually God . . . According to Immanental Modernism, Jesus was not actually God, but only a man in whom God supremely dwelt. It is true He dwelt in the person who suffered. But He also dwells in other martyrs, less fully indeed, but in precisely the same manner, viz., that of Immanence, not of Incarnation."[33]

According to the Trinitarian creeds, God is so constituted that one of three equal and eternal Persons,

[32]Edwin Lewis: Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, pp. 330, 114.
[33]Charles Harris: Creeds or No Creeds, pp. 143, 342.

could leave the other two and incarnate Himself in one man, Jesus. God was not immanent in Jesus as in other men, but Jesus was a unique Person, of whom it could be truthfully said that He was "Perfect God and Perfect Man." Popular Modernism, more in harmony with the Unitarian position, is content to say that God was in Christ, in the same sense, though in a more perfect degree, that He is in all good men. The two doctrines are quite incompatible. The saying that Satan entered into Judas (John xiii.) meant, in the language of the time, that Judas was a man in whom Satan was able to work his will; it did not mean that Satan was Judas or that Judas was Satan. The indwelling of Satan as an evil influence in a human life is meant, not the incarnation of Satan in the form of a man—like Mephistopheles, for example. Satan did not become a man in thus obsessing a man to do his will. In the same way, the saying that Jesus was full of the spirit of God, or that God entered into him did not mean, in the language of the time that God had become man or that a man was God incarnate; it meant that the man was willing to let his life be controlled by the spirit of love, identified with the indwelling spirit of God. Those who yielded to and did the will of Satan were called sons of the devil; those who yielded to and did the will of God were called the sons of God. In the one class worked the spirit of evil; in the other class worked the spirit of good. In effect Jesus said to the evil-minded, "Ye are of your father the devil; but I know God as my Father because I will to do His will and His spirit abides in me as a power for love and goodness." "And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," said Paul. They enter into a share of the experience of Jesus. The fundamental creeds of the churches, however, changed this idea of the divine immanence in Christ and in men to one of Incarnation in the case of Jesus and declared that God was not in him as a man, but that he himself was God incarnate, even

the Eternal Son, equal to the Father as to his deity though less than the Father as to his humanity. When Modernism exchanges this idea of a Divine Incarnation for the idea of the Divine Immanence, however desperately it may cling to the older phraseology of the creeds, straight thinking perceives that it is drifting toward the Unitarian position, even though it may deny the charge.

This statement by Macintosh might be quoted in illustration: "But God is only One Divine Person though immanent in myriads of human persons. God is the 'Father,' transcendently real, but self-revealing as well, and morally perfect. The uniquely saving revelation of God was in His well-beloved Son, the historic Jesus. But God who was in Christ, is at the same time the Holy Spirit, immanent in the Christlike everywhere. In this way the vital religious essence of historic Trinitarianism may be rationally retained for modern thought, and that without any requirement of subscription to the perplexing dogma of three eternal and equal divine persons, which are nevertheless not three personal gods, but One."[34] In other words, all the religious values of the traditional Trinitarianism may be as well preserved without, as with the dogma, which is doubtless true, but a defense that wins his case for its opponent.

In the same strain, Leighton says that God "is immanent in ever-increasing degrees in all finite energies, in all forms of life, in man and most fully in Christ and all Christlike persons. He is a person, but much more than a person. He is the Spirit of the Cosmic Community in which we have membership, humble though it be."[35]

On the theistic interpretation of the world as one mass of divine energy organizing itself on different planes of existence, moral values gain divine support and authority. All that science may discover of the mechanism and

[34] D. C. Macintosh: Theology as an Empirical Science, p. 193.
[35] Joseph Leighton: Religion and the Mind of To-day, p. 164.

laws of the universe and of life become new insights into the mind and will of God. For one having this faith, in the words of Dean Mathews—"To approach God is not to approach a metaphysical Absolute or a Force not ourselves making for righteousness. In such conceptions lie little power to help. Nor is it to approach a spectral personification of human values. It is to approach God as the undefined Person immanent in the universe as we finite persons are related to our bodies; upon whose good will humanity can rest in its anxieties and sorrow, its discontents and aspirations; Who works in evolution and in human history; Who is as loving and sympathetic as Jesus Christ; to whom we can pray with full trust in His power and love; Who justifies our attempt to be loving; Who helps and transforms us."[36]

Unitarians object to descriptions of their teaching which represent it as essentially different from this doctrine of the divine immanence, because the ancient dogma of a Divine Incarnation of the Eternal Son in Jesus only is frankly rejected by them. They, of course, gladly admit that differences of thought and belief will be found among those whose first principle is the right of private judgment on all such matters. But they do not admit that Leighton Parks speaks accurately in saying what many seem to believe, that "The God of the Unitarians tends inevitably to become an individual removed from the universe, a conception which modern science has made it impossible for modern men to hold."[37] Few will question that the influence of recent scientific thought has been to strengthen faith in the immanence of God, but that is the faith to which Unitarians were among the first to give their unqualified support. Their danger lies rather in the opposite direction to that indicated above by Parks, by reason of which some of

[36] Shailer Mathews: The Faith of Modernism, p. 120.
[37] Leighton Parks: The Crisis in the Churches, p. 174.

them, like Emerson, have been accused of a tendency toward pantheism.

Numbers of eminent Unitarian leaders might be quoted in refutation of the charge of making God "distant and inaccessible" by their rejection of the ancient dogma of the Trinity and an Incarnation of One of its constituent Persons confined Jesus. "Now in this matter of life," wrote Edward Everett Hale, "What I do or do not think about one thing or another is of very little consequence, if only I have the infinite help of God's Holy Spirit, which does come to any man who believes that God is, that God loves him, and is eager to help him, as being indeed His child."[38] "Let the intellect come home," said Martineau, "there in the inmost conscience God seeks you all the while" . . . "He never ceases to work within us, if we consent to will and to do His good pleasure."[39] "We can no more ignore God than we can ignore the sun," wrote Crooker. "He finds us as the light finds us. It is the function of the church to help men live in God."[40] "The infinite God must fill each point of spirit as of space" said Theodore Parker. "Here then in God's presence in the soul is laid the basis for His direct influence on men."[41] "Our bodies are less closely united with our minds than is God with the inmost self," said Channing.[42] Emerson sums up the Unitarian testimony to the divine immanence in saying. "Ineffable is the union of God with man in every act of the soul."

> "So near is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers, "Lo, thou must,"
> The youth replies, "I can."

"God is so absolutely immanent in all things," wrote Charles W. Eliot, "that no mediation is needed between

[38]Edward Everett Hale: Life and Letters, II, p. 205.
[39]James Martineau: Studies in Christianity, p. 408.
[40]J. H. Crooker: The Church of Tomorrow, p. 96.
[41]Theodore Parker: A Discourse of Religion, p. 161.
[42]William Ellery Channing: The Perfect Life, p. 90.

Him and the least particle of His creation."[43] "The God of the Unitarian," declared Emerton, "is a transcendent God, a reality and not a fiction of the human mind. But the moment he has made this clear to himself, there comes another thought equally clear and equally insistent, that this same God, outside ourselves and outside the universe, is at the same time within us and within the universe."[44] From S. A. Eliot, who has been for twenty-five years President of the American Unitarian Association, we learn that, "Too often God has been pictured as a static rather than a dynamic energy . . . He is a distant and inaccessible autocrat giving occasional boons to suppliant worshipers. That conception of creative energy is beginning to give place to the idea of a God who is dynamic in the spirits of all His children . . . That means a God who is today and every day working in us and with us and through us in an evolving and ever-continuing creation."[45] "It is the gracious spirit of the All-Holy God living in the rational and moral and affective powers of men, that lifts life to its heights, that glorifies suffering, that exalts death," said Sullivan.[46] "It becomes intelligible," says Park, "to think of Him as a real Presence, a Divine Personality, an unseen and sympathetic Friend."[47] And we conclude the testimony to a Christian faith, that does not confuse the thought of the Divine Immanence with the ancient belief in a special Divine Incarnation, with the words of Armstrong,[48] "God then is not far off," but Tennyson speaks truth—

> "Speak to Him, thou, for He hears and spirit with can meet,
> Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands and feet."

[43]C. W. Eliot: Art. in the Harvard Theological Review, Oct., 1909.

[44]Ephraim Emerton: Unitarian Thought, p. 299.

[45]S. A. Eliot: Proceedings of the General Conference of Unitarian Churches, 1923, p. 92.

[46]W. L. Sullivan: Ultimate Principles of Free Christianity, p. 17.

[47]C. E. Park: God, our Father.

[48]R. A. Armstrong: God and the soul, p. 117.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE BY LAW

"It is only when we deny eternal punishment that we can assert in a believable manner the doctrine of retribution."

STOPFORD BROOKE.

Every point in the universe, from stones to stars, is the center of stupendous energy. Everywhere is motor action. All things are in motion at incredible velocities. Accepting the latest declarations of science about the electric constitution of what men used to think of as inert matter, we might say that all things are composed of Energy manifested in an ethereal medium. The various forms of this motor action—light, heat, electricity, atomic energy, electronic force—are each convertible into the other. When life takes command, it directs this energy to express itself in plants and trees, insects, animals, and men. Mind emerges in the more highly organized of living forms with growing areas of control over the physical forces in which it exists. Social relations and moral codes grow out of the experiences of men together. Intense activity is everywhere, in the dead as in the living. Forces collide, interact, interweave, coöperate, and counteract, perpetually streaming forward through time and space, evolving into new combinations and fresh mutations. The human mind confronts this sublime scene and seeks to know its meaning, to comprehend these activities, and to gain as much control as possible over these moving energies for its own creative purposes.

As mystery piles on mystery and wonder on wonder, the most impressive observation we make of this cosmic panorama is that all these energies move with order like

regiments marching to the same music, their evolutions coördinated by one commanding mind. Each individual from an atom to a man is a complete unit of internal organization, which in turn is related to a larger system external to itself. The complexity of the whole grows so bewildering and vast that no single actor is capable of observing or understanding more than an insignificant fraction of all that is going on. That we can have any real knowledge at all, beyond the passing sensations of the moment, is due to the fact that all forces and combinations of forces, below the level of the mind, invariably act in the same manner and produce the same results under the same conditions. These uniformities we chart and describe as natural laws. Every organized unit of energy acts in a certain definite way, whether it be an electron, an atom, a molecule, a current of electricity, a stone, or a living cell. A necessity is laid upon each to behave, under specified conditions in an invariable manner. This uniform mode of behavior we formulate as the "law" of its conduct. The law of gravitation, as formulated by Newton, states that "every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force directly as to their masses and inversely as the square of the distance which separates them." This tells us nothing about what gravitation is, nor why it acts just that way; it is description only of how it invariably acts.

We may observe the behavior of things, animals, and men in all their reactions to changes of condition and environment; we may experiment with them, draw inferences, and formulate descriptive laws, more or less accurately defining the sequences of events which occur. But how they have the power to act at all, or why, forever eludes us. We find ourselves in the midst of a marvelous variety of forces, mechanisms, instincts, minds, feelings, desires, and impulses, whose behavior, under the shifting, changing circumstances of the moving world,

furnish inexhaustible subjects for research. With increase of knowledge the conviction deepens that in all events, from the simplest to the most complex, there is a Reign of Law, even when ignorance of all the forces in action prevents our discovery of just what the law is. Molecules and matter, minds and men, physical forces and ethereal waves, suns and stars, are all portions of a Cosmic Empire, in which sequences of causes and effects are so related that they may be organized into a rational body of knowledge. He who could know all might rule all.

Enmeshed as we are in this vast system, we must learn to detect the invariable actions of the forces by which we are surrounded and learn to secure desirable or good effects from them and to avert undesirable or evil effects. Neither ignorance nor innocence protects from injury one who fails to watch his step. The flight of the child's body follows the same law as the senseless stone in falling from a height or into the fire or the sea. We must, therefore, learn how to adjust ourselves for self-preservation and self-development within a system whose laws are never amended nor revoked to save those who encounter its forces from pain or injury. Nature is a school in which we are educated under the discipline of law. These are the conditions under which we must work out our destiny.

Though we suffer daily from ignorant maladjustments or deliberate collisions with forces whose laws we transgress, it were foolish to wish things were constituted otherwise. If there were any uncertainty about the way in which the forces of nature would operate we could be sure of nothing. That which is beneficial today might be injurious tomorrow. If fire did not always scorch the unprotected hand, or water drown, or gravitation crash the unsupported body to the earth, or sunlight tint the flowers with beauty, or the tides rise and fall with regularity, or chemical elements combine in the

same proportions to form the same substance, or love fail to be a blessing—if these laws of nature were intermittently suspended or changed—we should dwell in constant terror, never knowing what might happen next.

Witnessing the pain which victims suffer under this inexorable system, we sometimes cry out with Omar against "this sorry scheme of things" and fancy we might improve and make it more to our hearts' desire. By this we mean that we should like to provide for exceptions and exemptions to suit our convenience and pleasure. The lacerated hand of the workman who carelessly let it slip in the pathway of the whirling saw; the pains of the injured or groans of the dying, smitten by forces they knew not how to escape, awaken our compassion and we hurl curses at a system which permits such suffering. But in a "Living Universe," with mighty forces moving furiously along their appointed paths of service, how could exceptions be made without destroying the plan and beauty of the whole? The only way to safety is through knowledge and obedience.

The first great lesson of life is to learn that no man can safely do as he pleases. He lives under a reign of law. For the stability of the universe, for the eventual welfare and happiness of all creation, for the evolution and progress of mankind, for the acquisition of knowledge and the certainty of truth, for all blessing and beauty, for the development of the highest spiritual qualities of human nature through knowledge, self-control, and obedience, it is essential that the order of nature be maintained under this inviolate system of natural law. Pain is the warning signal to those in danger. The red lights are hoisted on every highway. The Greek poet declared that he who drives madly through life, heeding not the limits of the course, will strike a rock and dash in pieces the chariot of his prosperity. To learn the limits of the course, the laws that are in force, is the beginning of wisdom. In the language of religion this

is "the fear of the Lord," who has ordained this reign of law. And such is the solidarity of life, through the laws of heredity and the influence of environment, that the innocent must suffer from the ignorance and follies of others. The stupidity and sins of the parents bring suffering on their offspring; the weakness or wickedness of one brings grief to many. No man liveth to himself. We suffer or rejoice, rise or fall together, because we are bound together in the great network of physical, biologic, and social laws.

Experience has taught men that some forms of conduct are injurious to the highest interests of human life and to the welfare of society. If such conduct be deliberately chosen, with a view to personal profit or pleasure, and without regard to the pain or injury inflicted on others, it is morally wrong and worthy of punishment. If, however, such conduct is the result of ignorance or necessity, it will be disapproved and restrained by those who do understand its malign results. The natural consequences may be the same but moral guilt and need of punishment are absent. The rise of belief in a holy God led to the reflection that He must also pass moral judgment on the acts of men and condemn the guilty and punish them. But how? Nothing is harder for us men to determine than the extent of moral guilt. To what extent are men the dupes of their own ignorance or the victims of circumstances over which they have no effective control? God only knows.

"Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly can compute,
But know not what's resisted."

"What we have," as Patrick truly says, "is a striving organism, subject to influences on every side, accepting or resisting them, threading its way through them, battling against them, pressing ever on."[1] And this human

[1] G. W. T. Patrick: The World and its Meaning, p. 334.

organism—a raging cauldron of physical, vital, and psychical forces, working their will upon it according to their various laws, determined as to its behavior in many respects by its own constitution, possessing a variable degree of freedom in self-direction and choice of purposes and means, though driven by strong and conflicting desires and impulses—must learn to thread its perilous way with safety to its goal, without injury to itself or others. Partial failure is inevitable. Difficulties too baffling meet it on every side for it to be otherwise.

That some behavior is good and other evil soon becomes apparent to us; but life is so complex that the answer is not always clear when we ask in any set of circumstances, "What is right"? The measure of knowledge and freedom which an individual possesses, and the degree of guilt attached to his conduct and the punishment he deserves, are among the hardest questions of ethics and psychology. They could not be answered with certainty without a complete knowledge of the whole man, as a physical and mental organism of which most of the motive energy is buried deeply in the subconscious—and this knowledge we do not possess. The only certainty is that our greatest need is for knowledge and discipline; knowledge of the facts and laws of nature and of life, and the personal and social discipline that will bring our lives into harmony with them for our own perfecting and safety, and for the welfare and happiness of others.

And what shall be done to the guilty? They cannot escape the moral judgment and condemnation of their fellows. Nor if God be a moral governor, can they escape His condemnation and punishment? But what form will his judgments take? Such questions are easier asked than answered.

The Old Testament writers wrestled with the problem and sought for an answer in the material affairs of men. The answer on which they pitched was that the good

get a reward of health and prosperity for their efforts to live rightly, and the wicked a penalty of disease, disaster, and adversity from the Lord. That solution of the problem was an attractive one but the facts were against it. In the drama of Job it is discussed and repudiated. Some others of the Hebrew poets also expressed their dissent. The arrows of calamity do not always pierce the wicked and they sometimes slay the righteous. Worldly failure and earthly suffering do not always follow sin. Are we to conclude that the Moral Ruler of the world is therefore blind or indifferent?

Jewish thought then moved freely only on the plane of material existence. The ideas of Israel concerning a future state were vague and incoherent. "Up to the beginning of the second century B.C.," says Toy, "there was no conception of a life beyond the grave such as furnished support and stimulus for the present life."[2] To retain the favor and aid of Jehovah, the State religion depended upon a priesthood to propitiate him with tithes and offerings, and the blessings to be gained as well as the sufferings to be averted were entirely confined to this world.

Continued meditation on the course of life, hatred of death and the desire to see justice done to both the good and the evil, made contact with adjacent civilizations fruitful of new solutions of the ever-present problem. During and after the exile Persian influences penetrated the thought of Israel and helped in the reconstruction of its religious beliefs. The gods of the heathen became angelic messengers of Jehovah or demons of the lower world opposing his beneficence. Human life was extended into the world beyond death. Justice deferred in this world could now be thought to be executed in the hereafter. God would raise the dead from their graves to be rewarded or punished for the deeds of the earthly life. For two centuries before Christ, these im-

[2] C. H. Toy: Judaism and Christianity, pp. 385, 171.

ported doctrines flourished in Israel, though only fragments of the literature of that period have been given a place in our Bible. Possibly Sadducean influence, permeated with the ideas of the ancient priesthood and opposed to this new theology, was responsible for this omission. When their country passed from Persian to Greek overlordship, the Jews could not entirely escape being influenced by the reasonings of the Greeks. "The first clear idea of the soul," says Kohler, "came with the philosophically trained teachers, who were dependent on Plato, main founder of the doctrine of immortality, and on Aristotle."[3] With this extension of human life beyond the grave came a new solution of the problem as to how the righteous would receive justice and the wicked their punishment. Events hereafter would justify the ways of God with men. The explanation given was that "The soul of the righteous enters the world of angels after death; that of the wicked the world of demons."[4]

This conclusion was the product of a combination of speculative philosophy and popular mythology. Israel received it from Persia and Greece and passed it on to the Christian Church, where it was established as a sure revelation of truth from God to Israel.

Historians could show popular evangelism, if it would give them a hearing, that much of its materials came out of the so-called pagan thought of the ancient Near East. From Persian uplands and Greek academies flowed streams of doctrine into Israel, which Christians have since claimed to be truth revealed by divine inspiration. "Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Persian Empire," says Moore, "taught the judgment of individuals at death, in which each man's destiny was determined by his religion, and by his thoughts, words and deeds in this life, the souls of the righteous being admitted to

[3]K. Kohler: Jewish Theology, p. 290.
[4]Jackson and Lake: The Beginnings of Christianity, pp. 52–53.

the abode of infinite light, while the wicked are hurled down to hell. When the present age of the world is at an end and there will be a general judgment of all mankind, the bodies of the dead will be raised in a general resurrection and, reunited with their souls, will stand at the bar of God in the great assize. In the end all evil will be destroyed forever, and the world renewed for the habitation of the righteous . . . It was the Pharisees and those who followed their leading, who took up with conviction and enthusiasm these new ideas. Among other classes they had less ready acceptance."[5]

This system of doctrine became embroidered and adorned with all the fantastic and grotesque features that Oriental imagination could devise. It had immense possibilities for development in this direction. Each religion and sect came to have its own specific way of saving its votaries from the power of the demons and the woes of hell, its own formula for opening to its faithful the gates of Paradise. Each formed the habit of consigning to the inferno of the future all who remained indifferent to its teaching or relied upon some other method of salvation. Orthodox Christians at a later date became apt pupils in this school of theology, and added many special horrors of their own to the fate of those who rejected the scheme of salvation, which they proffered. The menace of hell was thenceforth sure to figure prominently among the arguments of theologic bigotry.

This was too effective a weapon for any religion entirely to ignore. From the religion of old Egypt, with its "fiery furnaces in which the enemies of Osiris are consumed, soul, body and head," to the Moslem fate of unbelievers "tormented with huge scorpions and serpents, by fire and boiling water," offenders against the moral code or ritual rules of religion were threatened with every torment a fevered imagination could conceive. Neither

[5]George F. Moore: History of Religions, II, pp. 55, 339.

space nor inclination permits us here to dwell upon the details of this dreadful mythology, but it may be found fully described in many works on the subject.[6]

These ideas had become popular in Israel by the time of Christ. "The Hassidim or pious ones," says Kohler, "and their successors, the Pharisees, were developing after the Persian pattern the thought of a divine judgment after death, when the just were to awaken to eternal life and evil-doers to shame and everlasting contempt."[7]

The nation, suffering from defeat and exploitation by powerful enemies, was stirred to vindictive wrath and a demand for retaliation denied them in the present world. Popular religion consigned Judah's heathen enemies to Gehenna, to "fire and worms, ice and cold, chains and darkness, and constant instruments of torture." The writer of the Book of Judith exults over his expectation that the Almighty will put "fire and worms in the flesh of the oppressors and they shall weep and feel their pain forever." Others like Enoch, seem to think that the sufferers will be finally annihilated—"As lead in the water they shall sink before the face of the righteous and no trace of them shall be found." In Fourth Esdras we read: "And the earth shall restore those that sleep in her; and so shall the dust give back those that dwell in silence. The lake of torment shall be revealed and opposite to it the place of joy; the furnace of Gehenna will be visible and opposite to it the bliss of Paradise. Gaze now here and there, here rest and bliss, there fire and torment." Renegade Jews were also doomed to share the heathen fate.

The duration, as well as the nature of this future punishment, was the subject of much speculation. As a rule the most influential teachers shrank from affirming that it would be endless. In the school of Hillel it was

[6] Op. cit., See Index, Hell.
[7] K. Kohler: Jewish Theology, p. 283.

taught that "sinners are tormented in Gehenna for twelve months, after which their souls and bodies are burnt up and scattered." Moore says that "as in Zoroastrianism, these fires are expiatory and purgatorial, not eternal. Akiba lets them last a year."[8] Much to the credit of Israel the humane view predominated. "The idea of eternal punishment is repugnant to the genius of Judaism," writes Rabbi Joseph, "Here and there a rabbi may be found advocating the notion, but such teaching does not represent true Jewish doctrine."[9] The great Maimonides wrote: "Not immortality, but the power to win eternal life through knowledge and the love of God is implanted in the soul. If it has ability to free itself from the bondage to the senses and by means of the knowledge of God to lift itself to the highest morality and purest thinking, then it has attained divine bliss, true immortality . . . If it sinks into the sensuousness of earthly existence, then it is cut off from eternal life; it suffers annihilation, like the beast."[11]

Jesus had no alternative but to talk to his hearers in the language with which they were familiar. He was, as we have seen, "a Jew of the first century," who had not brought with him from another world a stock of first-hand knowledge of that world. His own beliefs were naturally those of his own age and nation, though it is certain that he would lean toward the most humane views current among his people. Hence it is not surprising that he should use the language of the Jewish sects of the period to emphasize his condemnation of the evil and unjust. One surprising feature, however, we note in his words. He saw no ground whatever in the reasons commonly given by the Pharisees for sending people to Gehenna. He told them that they compassed heaven and earth to make one religious proselyte and

[8]George F. Moore: History of Religions, II, p. 75.
[9]Morris Joseph: Judaism as Creed and Life, p. 146.
[9]Alfred Edersheim: Life and Times of Christ, II, p. 791 ff.
[11]K. Kohler: Jewish Theology, pp. 308.

then made him twofold more a child of hell than he was before. The future he declared would be full of surprises for the pious. In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, he assured them that only those who were kind and compassionate from all nations would escape damnation, though they were unconscious of possessing any religious merits; while many who regarded themselves as uncommonly religious, lacking true goodness of heart, would find themselves in Gehenna. Because he assailed the inhumanity and worldliness of the religious, and especially the combination of these with a reliance on religious rites and prayers to deliver them from the penalties due their own sins, "they took counsel together that they might take Jesus and kill him." Nothing provokes men more than to be told that the horrible fate with which they threaten others is to be their own just due.

The words "eternal" and "forever" as used in the Jewish writings, were used with evident looseness of meaning. In most cases strict endlessness does not seem to have been seriously thought of. In the "Jubilees," the word "forever" means only until the day of judgment, as when it is said that the fallen angels "are bound in the depths of the earth forever, till the day when judgment is executed." The consensus of opinion in regard to future penalties seemed to favor an indeterminate sentence, having either a corrective purpose or else ending in extinction. The language of Christ and his apostles must therefore in a similar connection be interpreted in accordance with the prevailing usage and in the light of the fact that they were not men likely to favor useless torments of cruelty. "Nor can the doctrine of endless punishment," says Stevens, "and of the necessary fixity of destiny at death be legitimately built upon the word 'eternal,' both because it is itself too indefinite a word, and because it is the Greek translation of a still more indefinite Aramaic term. Both rewards and penal-

ties to come are eonian [eternal]; they are those belonging to the coming eon, the epoch toward which the longings of all hearts are directed, the age of Messiah's coming, victory and judgment."[12]

The Church, however, made itself the heir of the most inhuman speculations of ancient mythology and then invented and added other torments of its own. It appealed to the language of Scripture to prove their reality and denied that suffering would ever end. The dogma of endless sin and pain for all who should die unsaved by a right belief concerning Christ and his atoning blood or by the sacraments of the Church, was preached with superstitious fanaticism. It intimidated many, but alienated others. Only slender support could be found for it in reason or the Scriptures, but the clergy seemed to find it too valuable a weapon to give it up.

Institutionalized religion has a fatal tendency toward pharisaism. Loyalty to an institution is substituted for loyalty to truth, justice, and humanity. The service of God is identified with cant phrases, formal prayers, traditional beliefs and external acts of piety. The heart may remain brutishly cruel and selfish; the tongue may be a weapon of venomous spite or malice; the confession of religion may become the whine of the hypocrite or the snarl of the tyrant; and the life may manifest the calculating greed that would grasp after rewards in heaven for every paltry service on earth. Where the heart lacks "sweetness and light," where there is no magnanimity or nobility of soul, where personal vanity or pride of sect or eagerness for a crown of glory, poisons the inner life of one who is outwardly devoted to works of piety, religion may be more of a curse than a blessing. Sour saints are less attractice than kindly sinners. Hence Jesus affirmed his belief that the "outer darkness" would be crowded with souls who claimed

[12]George B. Stevens: The Teaching of Jesus, p. 186.

to have been religious, but who were not kind and good, while the realm of light would be thronged with a multitude of surprised and humble ones, who had loved their fellowmen and had expected no reward for it. That gave hell a new meaning, which even members of our Christian churches are sometimes slow to approve.

As converts to the first Christian churches brought with them many of their old beliefs, their belief in eternal punishment became naturalized in its new home and adapted to new uses. Animated by a convert zeal for their new faith they soon became convinced that all but themselves were doomed to the eternal fires. On the analogy of the sacrifices of the priesthood, which were said to have been the appointed means of old, by which Israel might escape "famine, pestilence and the sword," sent by an offended God, the belief developed that the "Perfect Sacrifice" on Calvary, received by faith, was the only means by which men might escape the doom of endless pain to which the entire race was hastening. A paganized Christianity established an ecclesiastical court, which threatened with the implacable wrath of God and endless suffering all who had not the true and saving faith. "He that believeth not shall be damned," gathered around its original meaning all the horrors of the pagan and Jewish hells and prolonged them through eternity.

Furnished with this admirable weapon of terror the Church set out to convert the world. It did not draw the sword like Islam, but the terrors of hell were brandished as an accompaniment to the demand to surrender to the Church. Heretics were destroyed on the logical plea that to allow them freedom and life would imperil the safety of countless souls and make them victims of the wrath to come.

"Christianity took the conception from Judaism," says Toy. "The representation of future punishment in the New Testament is substantially the same as that of

Enoch."[13] But the new religion went far beyond the old and proclaimed the absolute endlessness of future woe. It outdid the heathen by characterizing the grossest features of the old mythologies as the certainties of a divine revelation. In the Apocalypse of Peter, "we read of the dark place of torment, of the different classes of sinners, and of the punishments, each undergone in an appointed place, of the torturing angels and so forth. All these fancies are of Orphic origin and can be paralleled from Plutarch, Virgil and Lucian . . . The only difference between Christians and Greeks was that in place of Minos and Rhadamanthus, Christ judged the dead and that not only the soul but also the body was punished and that for ever."[14]

"Once started in this way," says Moore, "the inferno becomes more and more grewsome as each succeeding representation tried to give new thrills of horror, which is a morbid pleasure. When Christianity came it made itself heir to these hells; the torments of the Apocalypse of Peter and later writings of the sort are of unmistakable Orphic invention and the transmission can be followed through the Middle Ages in unbroken line with variation and increment of horrors from the barbarous imagination of the North."[15]

This system of divine penology, according to the Church, made the eternal fate of men to depend upon their beliefs and conduct in this life. Destiny was fixed at the grave. Death ends all hope of future salvation and all fear of future damnation. The period of probation has been finished. Punishment after death has no corrective value for any except those who die in communion with and protected by the Church. Purgatorial pains may await them, but their duration may be shortened by the offices of the priesthood and the intercessions of the saints. On all others would descend without

[13]C. H. Toy: Christianity and Judaism, p. 405.
[14]Paul Wernle: The Beginnings of Christianity, II, p. 134.
[15]George F. Moore: History of Religions, II, pp. 450,504.

mercy or mitigation forever all the fury of God and all the misery that malignant demons could devise to make existence an intolerable burden. Protestants cast away even the ameliorating doctrine of purgatory and consigned all unbelievers and unconverted to the hopeless doom, from which even the Church could not save them.

In spite of almost universal scepticism on this subject today, no church with an established reputation for orthodoxy has had the courage to repudiate this frightful libel on the goodness and justice of God. It makes Him inconceivably unloveable. "All men who through their own fault die without Christian faith," says the Roman Church, "are by the just judgment of God sentenced to eternal perdition."[16] "The wicked who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ," declares the Westminster Confession, "shall be cast into eternal torments." According to Methodist doctrine, hell "is a place of everlasting sin and everlasting punishment," for Wesley said, "The fire either material or infinitely worse, that tormenteth the body is not quenched forever."[17] Bishop Pearson interpreted the creeds to mean, as Canon Farrar showed, that the vast majority of mankind will be "delivered up under the curse to be tormented with the devil and his angels. That their persons shall continue forever in this remediless condition under an everlasting pain of loss."[18] The attempt is made to bribe the faithful to believe this true because, "we must admit the endless misery of hell or give up the endless happiness of heaven."[19]

This picture of divine "justice" is used to heighten by contrast the picture of divine "love," in providing the way of escape from this dreadful fate by means of a free pardon for all who will accept and trust in the "Plan of Salvation" entrusted to the administration of

[16]Francis Spirago: The Catechism Explained, p. 101.
[17]Principal W. I. Shaw: Digest of Methodist Doctrinal Standards, p. 128.
[18]Bishop Pearson: Exposition of the Creed, p. 584.
[19]J. B. Remensnyder: Doom Eternal, pp. 368, 103.

an adoring Church. Not always in such plain words as those of Spurgeon, but with the same essential meaning, the picture is drawn as follows: "Man for his sin was condemned to live in hell forever. God did not send Christ to hell forever; but he put on Christ punishment equivalent to that . . . There was our debt, huge, immense—he paid the uttermost farthing of whatever his people owed; and now there is not so much as a farthing due to the justice of God in the way of punishment for any believer, for Christ in that hour took all our sins, past, present and to come, that we might never be punished, because he suffered in our stead."[20]

This dogma has become so repugnant to thoughtful minds that the veil is now often drawn discreetly over it. The Church in general has today the grace to be almost ashamed of it. But if it be true all men should hear it openly proclaimed; and if it be fiction it should be openly renounced by all. For honest men there would seem to be no middle course. But what shall be said of the suave self-complacency which can assure the tender hearted who revolt that, "If the great Father-God can witness such sufferings, I am confident that in some way He will enable His ransomed ones to regard with perfect contentment every exercise of His high prerogative, whether in wrath or in mercy."[21]

Small wonder that multitudes of this generation are ready to cry with Ingersoll, "The doctrine of eternal pain is my trouble with this Christian religion. I reject it on account of its infinite heartlessness." Or with greater faith in the divine goodness they may say with Whittier,

> "Has saintly ease no pitying care?
> Has faith no work and love no care?
> While sin remains and souls in darkness dwell
> Can heaven itself be heaven and look unmoved on hell?"

The more sincerely this dogma has been believed the

[20]Charles Spurgeon: Sermons, IV, p. 217.
[21]Principal W. I. Shaw: Eternal Punishment, p. 39.

worse its effects have been. The scepticism of men has saved the world from its most baneful consequences. Lecky graphically describes the period when faith was less troubled with doubt than now and mental reservations were less tolerated. He says: "After the religious terrorism that followed the twelfth century that doctrine attained its full elaboration. The agonies of hell seemed then the central subject of the thoughts of men. The whole intellect of Europe was employed in illustrating them. All literature, all eloquence, all painting was concentrated on the same dreadful theme. By the pen of Dante and the pencil of Oracgna, by pictures that crowded every church and sermons that rang from every pulpit, the maddening terror was maintained . . . It was the natural result of that teaching that men, whose lives in many respects present examples of the noblest virtues, were nevertheless conspicuous for ages as prodigies of barbarity and proved absolutely indifferent to the sufferings of those dissenting from their doctrines. Nor was it toward the heretic only that this inhumanity was displayed; it was reflected more or less in the whole penal system of the time. We have a striking example of this in the history of torture . . . Its necessary effect was to chill and deaden the sympathies, to predispose men to inflict suffering and seriously to retard the progress of civilization."[22] Stopford Brooke is right in saying: "We owe to this doctrine all the slaughter and cruelty done by alternately triumphant sects in the name of God. It gave birth to the Inquisition; it drove the Jews into intolerable misery; it burnt thousands of innocent men and women for witchcraft; it tortured and rent the bodies and souls of men; it kept the world for centuries in darkness; it held back civilization; and in all ages it urged the dogs of fanaticism and cruelty in their accursed hunting."[23] Yet knowing this to be true,

[22] W. E. H. Lecky: History of Rationalism, Chap. 3.
[23] Stopford Brooke: Essay on Eternal Punishment.

why do the churches, except the smaller liberal bodies, remain so silent?

Nevertheless, a growing number in every church are finding this hoary superstition intolerable. As Dr. Smith says, "We cannot attribute to God a method of dealing with delinquency which would be condemned if practised in our courts of justice."[24] In the words of Emmet: "It is our belief in the Fatherhood of God, which makes the idea of unending torment strictly intolerable. If a dog acquired irremediable bad habits, making him a nuisance and a danger, what should we say to a master, who, instead of shooting him at once, chained him up to starve and torture him until he had expiated the mischief he had done? . . . To say that any sin deserves an "infinite" penalty is an outrage to the very sense of fairness the argument invokes. Many will find it difficult to conceive of the God of Jesus inflicting any punishment which is not in some way remedial and diciplinary; it is certainly impossible to regard him as condemning any sinner to unending and purposeless torments."[25]

Whether the penal system of the Almighty was patterned after the cruel punishments of men or the penal systems of men were patterned after the supposed methods of the Almighty, both were understood for centuries to follow the same principles. Every court was equipped like hell with instruments of torture. The welfare and reformation of the offender were the last things to be thought of in both cases. The principal concern was how to find methods of causing the utmost pain. Over every prison might be inscribed the words which Dante says he saw over the gates of hell, "All hope abandon ye who enter here."

What is the nature of the results of such a system of penology, human or divine? "The brutalizing effect

[24]G. B. Smith: Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion, p. 519.
[25]C. W. Emmet: in Immortality by Streeter and others, p. 213.

which it had upon the whole population," says Wines, "can hardly be conceived in this modern age of refinement. In the midst of general lawlessness every man was, when he had the power, a law unto himself, and inflicted on his enemy the punishment which the law destined for the evil-doer . . . The truth of the adage that "crime thrives on severe penalties" is demonstrated by the experience of mankind."[26] Mercier declares: "The hangings, the transportations, the imprisonments in foul and noisome dungeons, the floggings, the pillories, the brandings and multilations, never sufficed to deter people from committing crime. On the contrary, in the days of savage punishments crimes were far more flagrant and far more brutal than now. Severity of punishment has had its trial and has utterly failed."[27] The same may be said of the theological "schrecklichkeit," the reign of terror sustained by belief in an endless hell. This only stimulated the minds of men to seek out methods of escape from the haunting horror, and they found them in magic, ritual, formal faith in atoning blood, sacramental grace, or religious conformity. Sin thrives on penalties irrationally and unjustly severe.

Scientific penology and psychology are rapidly rendering this old theological fiction as obsolete as demonology. We are now in process of learning what is meant by the discipline of life under law. When suffering is inflicted on the wrong-doer either by nature or by society, it must not be a purposeless cruelty but for the protection of society and for the reformation of the offender. The modern principle was well stated by Solovyof: "The victim of a crime has a right to protection and, as far as possible, to compensation; society has a right to safety; the criminal has a right to correction and reformation."[28] To protect these rights equally should be the aim of all just administration of

[26]F. H. Wines: Punishment and Reformation, pp. 72, 105.
[27]Charles Mercier: Crime and Criminals, p. 276 ff.
[28]Vladimir Solovyof: The Justification of the Good, p. 323.

law. This should be even more obligatory on a divine government than on a human administration.

Speaking as a psychologist, McDougall writes: "Punishment is only justifiable, is only moral punishment, when inflicted as a deterrent from further wrong doing and as an influence capable of moulding character. That is to say, men are only morally responsible, or rightly liable to punishment, if the punishment may fairly be expected to deter them from further wrong-doing or to modify their natures for the better."[29] Moral responsibility implies a capacity to learn from experience and ability to improve under discipline and education; if that capacity and that ability be absent then the infliction of suffering becomes a senseless and useless cruelty. If we can imagine the divine government to be less humane in its principles than the methods sanctioned by modern penology, it can only be because mythological traditions blind us to the facts of life.

As there is a way of living more conducive to physical health than all other ways of living, so is there a way of living more favorable to personal blessedness and social welfare than the others. There is a physical order governed according to law, and there is a moral order. As Carver says, "We must discover the moral order by experience and observation precisely as we discover the hygienic order. This happens also to be consistent with the highest form of religious thought which the world possesses today."[30] That which experience has shown to be the best kind of living for all men is the moral order which religion proclaims as the will of God. And the discovery of the moral order, as of the hygienic order, was made possible by the fact that men may not transgress it without evil consequences to themselves and others. The penalty falls for the purpose of instruction and correction. The presence of filth brings

[29] William McDougall: Social Psychology, p. 238.
[30] T. N. Carver: Essays on Social Justice, p. 26.

on an outbreak of typhoid fever because the legislation in force decrees that the human organism shall find and preserve health only in cleanliness, sunshine, and fresh air. The prevalence of sexual vice leads to degeneracy and misery, because human life is so organized that health and happiness may be found only in continence, purity and love. For physical health and vigor we must learn and then obey the laws of nature. The penalties, personal and social, which fall on ignorance and disobedience, are intended to deter men from the violation of law and to drive them back into obedience. For the enjoyment of a wholesome and perfect life, adjustment to the demands of the moral order is necessary, and unless we do discover these principles and obey them, the whole nature of man will suffer.

The very fact of suffering under such a system of discipline by law becomes a ground for hope. Pain is a danger signal that a wrong fork of the road has been taken and that there must be another and better road. The most hopeless and hardened sinner is one who has become so coarsened by familiarity with evil that he ceases to suffer from it. If there were such a state as that of incurable sin, we should forecast, from what we know of life, that it would be a state in which positive suffering had ceased and perverted nature had come to find its happiness in evil. The lowest hell would then be a painless hell, and hence represent a condition beyond instruction and correction. Or possibly the capacity for pain and pleasure would alike become extinct and life be lost in unconsciousness.

Modern penology is based upon the principle adopted, in opposition to the legal and religious precedents of the past, by the French Revolutionary Assembly in 1791: "Penalties should be proportioned to the crimes for which they are inflicted and they are intended not merely to punish but to reform the culprit." This same principle was adopted by the American Prison Association

in 1870: "The supreme aim of prison discipline is the reformation of criminals and not the infliction of vindictive suffering." Channing said in 1825, "In proportion as the spirit of Christianity is understood and felt, punishment will become an instrument of reform." If such be the purpose of the human discipline of offenders against our laws, we may well believe that the purpose of the divine discipline under the universal reign of law will be not less humane but also infinitely more effective.

In the present state of our knowledge we are unable to deal effectively with all cases. The feebleminded, the neurotic, the depraved, the moral imbecile, the psychopathic, the victims of ancestral sins with diseased bodies and minds, and creatures endowed with desires and passions that defy the control of the reason and the will, offer many problems at present insoluble by human skill. Shall we therefore conclude that because they were launched into life badly equipped for the race or so unbalanced that we can find no way to remedy their defects, they must therefore suffer from these handicaps forever? Rather ought we to have faith that the methods of God may succeed where we now fail and will finally triumph over obstacles that appear to us to be insurmountable?

In the faith of Progressive Christianity there is no tendency either to ignore or to make light of sin Neither is there reason for despair. Sin and its evil consequences cannot, indeed, be overcome and banished by believing religious fictions nor by ritual performances. Under the discipline of law the evil-doer reaps what he sows. The Prodigal may return, but whipped and beaten, bearing self-inflicted wounds and the sad memories of many wasted years of life. The process of recovery by repentance and reformation is itself a bitter part of the retribution.

The salvation of mankind from sins of will and defects of blood is a vastly complicated business, demanding

the coöperation of men with God. And the work of prevention, by moral and religious education, by social and family discipline, and by other social agencies is more important than all remedial measures to salvage the injured or restore the fallen. And the race that has already risen by an evolution that has carried it out of the jungle to a vision of divine perfection and beauty will not fail. God will not let it fail.

"And in our belief," said Stopford Brooke, "the ground of retribution is this; that God cannot rest until He has wrought evil out of all spirits, and that this work of His is chiefly done by causing us to suffer the natural consequences of sin . . . God will not cease to be a consuming fire till He has destroyed evil . . . It is love according to law. It is love, which though it causes suffering does not injure the heart, for the root of it is not desire to make us suffer, but desire to make us pure, noble and true. God cannot allow eternal evil and continue to be God. And if he allow eternal punishment He does allow eternal evil. It is a vile conception, and if it were true, we should be forced to pray to a cruel power for the only favor we should find with all our hearts desire for ourselves and for the world, the favor of instant and complete annihilation."[31]

The partial success which men sometimes achieve in this work of eradicating evil, and in the short time at their disposal, gives ground for hope with Tennyson,

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet,
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void
> When God has made His pile complete."

[31] Stopford Brooke: Essay on Eternal Punishment.

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